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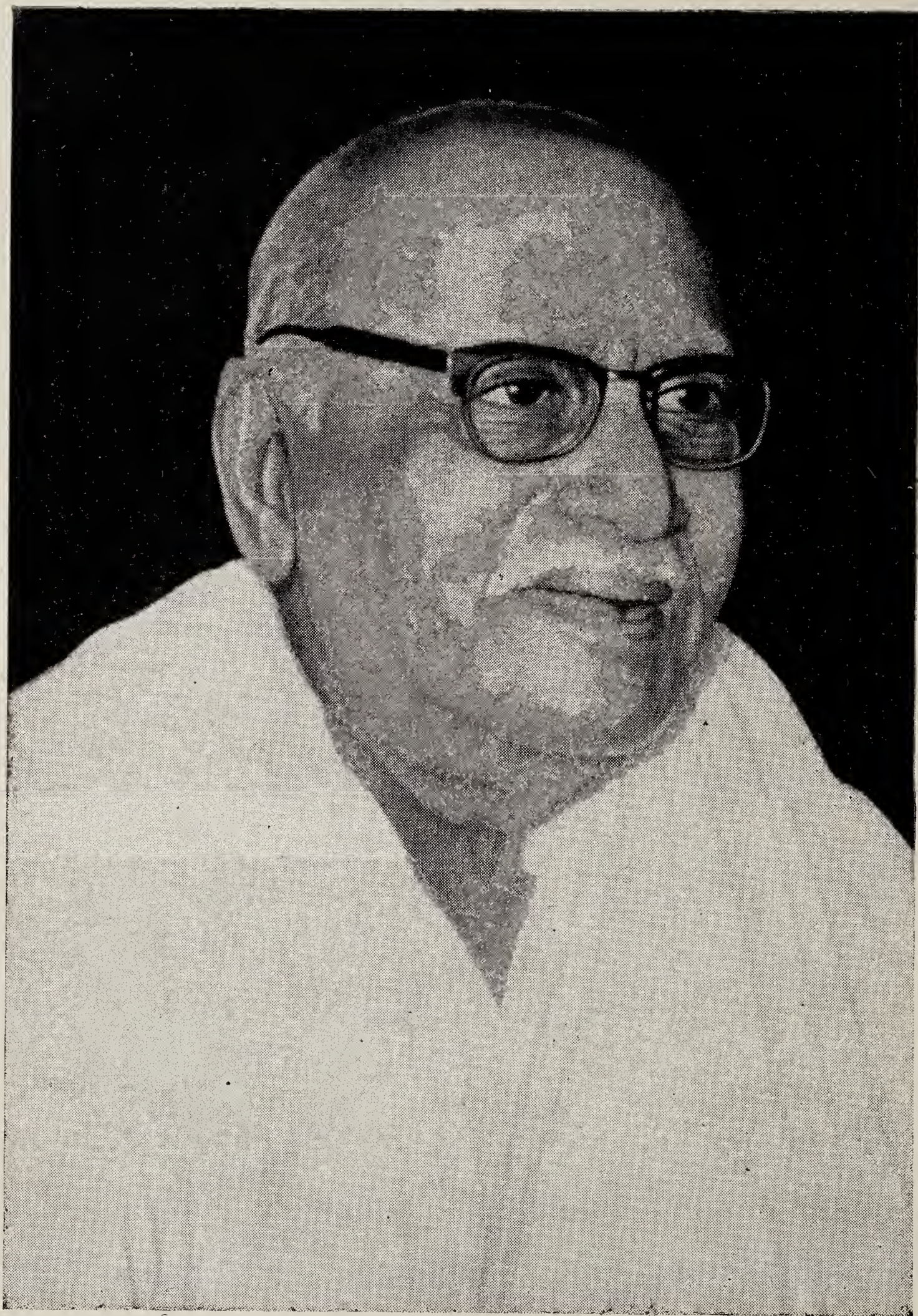
HANUMAN
PRASAD
PODDAR

DR. BRAJLAL VERMA



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Dr. BRAJLAL VERMA

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
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Preface

Man today is beset by problems and worries. He is restless and is hankering for peace all the time. He is dazzled by the glitter of the material world and has lost his moorings and his sense of purpose. He is dogged by multiple sorrows, griefs and pains. Perhaps life stories of those great men who have struggled against such problems and overcome them can still inspire men and infuse in them the courage to break the shackles which chain them.

It was with this object in view that the Publications Division of the Government of India gave me the responsibility to write a brief biography of the Late Hanuman Prasad Poddar (Bhaiji), the mainstay of the Gita Press, Gorakhpur and editor of *Kalyan*, under the '*Builders of Modern India*' series, for which I am sincerely grateful.

The material used in this book is entirely authentic. It consists of the various writings of Bhaiji and the large collection of the reminiscences of him gathered in *Pawan Smaran*, which has been edited by the Late Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, a great scholar and devotee. The problem before me was that of selecting and including in the small sized biography material that was so vast and voluminous. I can say that I have not left any essential detail about Bhaiji in this book nor have I transgressed the limits laid down.

Every bit of my existence has been full of the limitless love and respect and kindness of Brahmarishi Radha Baba (Swami Chakradharji Maharaj) who is a great spiritual soul, and it is due to his blessings that this book could be taken up and completed. I shall pray to him to accept my *Pranams* but shall

not express my gratitude to him. Saintly souls are kind to all living beings and he was kind to me too. He could not help it and it was this gesture that enabled me to succeed in my effort although I feel I was not equal to the task.

I am grateful to Shri Parmeshwar Prasad Phogla and his family as also to Shri Vishnu Hari Dalmia for their co-operation and assistance.

The collaboration of my friend and a Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Mithilesh Kumar Misra, was very useful in preparing this book. I express my sincere thanks to him.

In the middle of Gita Press, Gorakhpur, on one side is situated that room in which Bhaiji used to sit day in and day out and sent out words of spirituality to the world from his constantly active pen, and at a short distance from this room is holy *Samadhi* of Bhaiji in which lie the remnants of his physical body. This gleam of creation and cremation, lying side by side, this living story of birth, sustenance and merger in the divinity of a saintly soul is most inspiring and revelatory. The book is in your hands. Your expectations and my faith have met and merged with each other. My numerous *Pranams* to Radha Baba. My repeated prostrations to the divine memories of the saintly soul of Bhaiji.

BRAJLAL VERMA
90A, Tagore Town, Allahabad

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Life-Story

WHILE ASSESSING the achievements of a great personality, it is essential to recall the circumstances affecting the course of his actions. Some of these may be favourable; others not so favourable. The gamut of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar's (Bhaiji's, as he was popularly known) accomplishments is vast indeed. His spiritual endeavours took several directions and through them he aspired to enhance the cultural quality of the Indian society. As was natural, Bhaiji's varied strivings were no less influenced by the contemporary circumstances. Political domination and exploitation under the British rule, the growing chasm between the rich and the poor, social evils, ignorance and superstitions and the sad plight of the peasant and the worker were agitating the views of patriots. Society, polity, culture, spirituality—all were breaking up. On the one hand was the glory that was India with its vast natural and other resources sufficient to provide joy and plenty to double the number inhabiting our land; on the other were the peasants and workers who laboured day-in and day-out to give us all the food we needed and all the amenities we desired, but were themselves ill-fed and ill-clothed all the year round. Little wonder that there was a strong undercurrent of deep dissatisfaction running throughout the length and breadth of the nation.

Painting a picture of the plight of our land, poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote in 1936, "I have seen, with my own eyes, that even after a hundred years of the British rule, there is dire dearth of food and drinking water in our villages.

Insanitary conditions, lack of medical and educational facilities, negligence of the means of communications and a sense of frustration prevail everywhere. As such, I do not feel that the British rule will prove beneficial to anyone whatsoever. It is considered a crime in this country to talk of the Soviet Union. But I cannot help comparing my country with the Soviet Union. I categorically confess that I am envious of the vigorous and extraordinary measures adopted by the Soviet Union to boost the production of grains, to eradicate diseases and to educate their people. There is no line of demarcation indicating lack of confidence and no humiliating discrimination between the Soviet Europe and the Soviet Asia. I am merely comparing the conditions obtaining there and in this country that I have myself observed. And I have come to the conclusion that the root cause of our present plight under the British domination is the ever widening gap between the rulers and the ruled.”¹

Meanwhile, the more clever and discerning among the Britishers too had become aware of this undercurrent of disaffection. A British administrator, A.O. Hume founded the Indian National Congress in the year 1885, although its objective at that point of time was to consolidate the British rule by appeasing the increasing discontent in India and create an impression that the British rule was beneficial to Indians. But the reality was something different. The rural economy of India was shattered owing to the deceitful policies of the British. Both the destructive and the constructive tendencies were displayed by the rulers. The British viceroys and governor-generals tried to perpetuate British rule through mixed bag policies of punishments and rewards, misrule and reform. There were peasants who produced grain but themselves faced starvation; workers who produced cloth but were themselves deprived of their product. No educational facilities for the general public existed. Such education was there which meant to train some Indians as clerks. The British rulers did issue proclamations from time

¹*India Today* by Rajani Palme Dutt.

to time to quell dissatisfaction. For instance, in 1833, a proclamation was made that "No Indian will be disqualified to hold any government job or office on the basis of his caste, creed or colour." Again, in 1858, Queen Victoria issued another proclamation which can be called as a new general policy of the British regime, although it was just a rehash of 1833 proclamation. It was stated therein that, "It is our desire that so far as possible our subjects ought to be taken in our services without any distinction of caste, creed or colour. They should be allowed to continue on such posts for which they were selected on the basis of their qualifications, education and loyalty." After the above proclamation, the British rulers continued to placate people with false promises through some reform or commission or conference. The Britishers kept deceiving Mahatma Gandhi from the first world war (1914-18) to the second (1939-45) in spite of several agitations and movements against it.

Such an attitude of callous courtesy did not permit Indian people for long either to incite or to get rid of the rule. Gandhiji launched several Civil Disobedience Movements from 1921 to 1941-42. At last, India became free from the clutches of the Britishers in 1947. They were forced to quit India as a cumulative consequence of several factors, such as the formation of Indian National Army by Subhas Chandra Bose, movements launched by Mahatma Gandhi, revolutionary activities of Chandra Shekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh, cultural and social reforms of Dayanand Saraswati and Raja Rammohan Roy, peasants' unrest and workers' struggles etc. The Britishers did quit India, but they left the legacy of a divided country and a new nation, Pakistan, came into being. Mohammed Ali Jinnah was in the forefront of the agitation for the division of India. The British rulers provoked Indian Muslims against the Hindus and also tried to poison the minds of Harijans against them. Gandhiji endeavoured on the one hand, for Hindu-Muslim unity and on the other for the uplift and welfare of the Harijans, but he could not avert the division of the country. Cow-slaughter

was being resorted to openly. Hindu Mahasabha, Ram Rajya Parishad and many more organizations were waging struggles to stop cow-slaughter. But all was in vain. However, the impression had taken root in Indians that slavery was responsible for our cultural backwardness and all ills flowed from the British rule in the country. The country certainly aroused with the feeling of patriotism and love of the nation and felt an urge to struggle for freedom.

Such were the times when Hanuman Prasad Poddar was born. He could not keep himself aloof from the main currents of the national movement. He went to prison as a result of his participation in Gandhiji's struggle for freedom and suffered all the consequent hardships. He made efforts towards stoppage of cow-slaughter and for religious re-generation. Bhaiji waged an unrelenting struggle for the uplift of the Indian people. He published periodicals and brought to light ancient scriptures for the purpose. He worked in various directions for the welfare of the people. He was, in fact, a great man with good of all in his generous heart.

A saint or Mahatma or a great man is one who sacrifices his all for the sake of his fellow human beings in the world. The true tales of such a sacrifice have always given solace to the suffering humanity throughout ages. Whenever the gloom of defeat has threatened to submerge man's mind, the stories of the great, born anywhere in the world, have invariably given him courage and hope and trust in a new life and a new world. The heroic tales of the great have infused new life in withered and disappointed hearts. Hanuman Prasad Poddar was a veritable embodiment of sacrifice, asceticism, high conduct and service of humanity. His firm conviction in universal brotherhood had made him a brother to all; and everyone, be he a child or an elderly person endearingly called him 'Bhaiji.' A friend of Poddarji, Lalji Yajnik, was overwhelmed by his love and affection that he came to look upon him as his real brother. It was he who first began to address him as Bhaiji. Everyone else afterwards followed suit. The story of such a generous and

large hearted soul cannot, therefore, be restricted to the narration of his personal life, ideals and achievements only but reflects the glow, of all those innumerable great personalities whose life will continue to provide light to men and society in search of the right path.

This world is a wonderful storehouse of God's countless gifts of greatmen and a stage of great ideas and ideals. It has been here that the rishis, saints, mahatmas, pirs and prophets have made their appearance and have bestowed joy on all through their spiritual practices and penances. Bhaiji is a link in this glorious chain of saintly men.

Hanuman Prasad Poddar was born on 17 September 1892, in Shillong, Assam. His father, Shri Bhimraj and mother, Mrs Rikhibai, were overjoyed to be blessed with a son. Ratangarh where Shri Bhimraj usually lived was a Tehsil town in Bikaner State of Rajasthan. It was inhabited by a sizable group of Poddar Vaishyas of Bansal Gotra. The Bansals were well known for their honesty and high conduct. Consequently Hindu and Muslim feudal chiefs had always entrusted the responsibility of their treasuries to them. *Pot* donates wealth, treasure or income. *Potdar* was the title for those who looked after the state funds. In ordinary parlance, *Potdar* indicated not a caste but a profession. There was one Sakhiram in the Bansal clan, who had a son Tarachand and grandsons Kaniram and Bhimraj. Kaniram's wife was Ramkaur Devi. They had no issue. With the consent of his father Tarachand, Kaniram adopted the son of his youngest brother. Ramkaur Devi loved the youngest brother of her husband as her own son. Bhimraj also treated the wife of his elder brother as a mother. Bhimraj's love, affection and behaviour for Kaniram and Ramkaur transformed the agony of their being issueless into joy.

But Kaniram and Ramkaur Devi came to have another cause for sorrow, which was that Bhimraj, too did not have any issue till long after his marriage. When the longing for an offspring remained unfulfilled it was only natural for him to turn his attention towards fulfilling his desire for wealth. Kaniram faced

several difficulties but ultimately established a huge business house in Shillong. He went on making profits. But Ramkaur Devi was becoming impatient on finding her adopted daughter-in-law issueless and she returned to Ratangarh and began to propitiate saints belonging to the Nath Panth. There was at that place, Acharya Mehadasji of Nimbark sect preaching *Vaishnav Bhakti*. He was particularly well disposed towards Ramkaur Devi. He prayed to God Hanuman to relieve the distress of his devotee. When saint Motinathji (Tuntia Maharaj) of Nath Panth came to know of her problem, he was pleased to tell Ramkaur Devi, "I myself will be born as your grandson. He will be an extraordinary person." He then described the many attributes and signs of the son to be born in the following words: "The Shri line on the brow, hair falling over the shoulders, a black wart (*til*) on the right thigh and a membranous blockage in the mouth which will have to be cleared with a finger, to enable the newly born to cry." Tuntia Maharaj gave up his body thereafter. Baba Mehadasji also gave his blessings for the birth of a son. He also enjoined that the son be named after Hanuman. Thus, the desire of Ramkaur Devi was fulfilled on 17 September 1982 and Rikhibai was blessed with a son of the kind of whom Tulsidas says, "Blessed is the young mother who gives birth to a son devoted to Rama."

Grandma Ramkaur Devi first named the boy Hanuman Baksh which was later changed to Hanuman Prasad. The family affectionately called him Mannalal or Mannu and Mania too.

The good luck in this world always comes with bad luck. The boy Hanuman Prasad was hardly five year old when his mother Rikhibai suddenly passed away. The upbringing of the boy, which was till now an emotional involvement for Ramkaur Devi, became henceforward a practical task. Her maternal feelings and responsibilities saw their fruition and she fully justified her name Ramkaur (Ram's morsel) by feeding him with *Ram Nam*. It appeared as if by leaving this world much before her time, mother Rikhibai impressed upon Ramkaur Devi that

actually it was due to her prayer and aspiration that the boy was born, and as such, she was his real mother.

But the untimely demise of his mother did affect the health of the boy. He became a victim of rickets. But thanks to the devotion and prayers of Ramkaur Devi, he gradually recovered. Ramkaur Devi then took the boy to Shillong. Assailed by the alternating circumstances of prosperity and adversity, the harshness of reality was manifested to him while yet a child. Hardly had a year gone by since the death of his mother when he saw the devastation of Shillong caused by an earthquake of great intensity. Huge buildings of the city were razed to the ground. Kaniram's sister and wife somehow managed to save their lives, but his sister's son and daughter, who were of the same age as Hanuman Prasad, were buried in the debris. Hanuman Prasad himself had gone to receive '*prasad*' in a religious ceremony at Shriniwas's Gola. He was returning with the '*prasad*' when the earthquake came bringing down the stone masonry of houses on to the road. The boy intoned "God Almighty is the great saviour" and it was instantly proved. The stones falling around the boy formed an arch framing him and he was saved. Then violent winds began to blow and the Gola was on fire. The fire and the lashing rain began to take their toll of human life. Both the children of one sister were crushed by the falling stones and only their dead bodies could be recovered. The grandson of the other sister was also killed. The devastating dance of death had left old parents heart-broken. Even then, they approached Shriniwas Gola in search of the two boys. Kaniram began shouting 'Mannu, Mannu'. "I am here, buried under stones, take me out quickly," he shouted back.

As soon as that God-built miraculous tomb was opened, the lost jewel was re-discovered. It appeared as if the family deity, Hanuman himself had brought out the herb of life from Dronachal hillock. Kaniram and Ramkaur clasped the child for long moments and were absorbed in the contemplation of the grace of Rama.

Kaniram had been shaken by the earthquake. Several of his relatives had been killed and he felt that he could not continue to live in Shillong. His residence had also been destroyed by the earthquake. The boy was just six years of age. Overcome by sorrow he passed away. The business had by this time spread through Shillong, Guwahti and Calcutta and it could hardly be handled by one person. So Bhimraj shifted with his family to Calcutta for greater convenience and change of location.

Widowhood is a curse for woman. Ramkaur Devi remained in Shillong, along with her grandson Hanuman Prasad, after the passing away of her husband. But she felt she was not equal to the difficulties of a solitary life. So, she too shifted to Calcutta with her grandson and began to live with her adopted son, Bhimraj. But the feeling of loneliness did not leave her even in Calcutta. She, therefore, shifted to Ratangarh in Rajasthan. Hanuman Prasad was admitted there for his primary schooling in Mahajani school. It was necessary for him to learn Mahajani well to assist in running the family business. The school was named Jorji's Pathshala after Joravarji who was a teacher in that school. Hanuman Prasad was taught Hindi and Arithmetic along with Mahajani which was taught through the Hariyanvai script prevalent in Bikaner, Jaiselmer and Bhiwani areas.

Ramkaur Devi's paternal place was in Amritsar. She had to go to Amritsar, along with her grandson, when she was called to visit the town. Urdu was the prevalent language in the schools there. But all efforts to teach Urdu to Hanuman Prasad came to naught. He could not pick up Urdu. The entire atmosphere in his home was permeated with the recitations of the sacred texts of Sanskrit language. Hence Hanuman Prasad's chief interest was Sanskrit. He also became well versed with several other languages.

A child's first school is home. Hanuman Prasad was a living example of the truth of the above maxim. Ramkaur Devi sent Hanuman Prasad to sit at the feet of a religious head of Nath Sect, Shri Vasannathji to learn Sanskrit. He began teaching the boy through the *Gita and Vishnu Sahasra Nam*. Whenever he

found the boy getting restive he would give him berries to eat and then tempt him back to the studies.

The boy had become well-versed in Hindi and Bengali while he was in Calcutta. Later, Hanuman Prasad developed his knowledge of Bengali further through his study of Bengali religious literature and his contacts with the Bengali revolutionaries of Bengal Partition Agitation fame. In his advanced age, he used to deliver speeches in fluent Bengali even in big conferences of Bengali-speaking people. He lived in Bombay in connection with his family business and there learnt Gujrati and Marathi. He himself used to translate important religious books from Gujrati and Marathi into Hindi. Similarly, he learnt English in a school situated on the second floor of Kaligodam (Calcutta). One of the teachers in that school was Ayodhya Prasadji, who was a Arya Samajist and a man of high character. It was he who taught him rudimentary English. Hanuman Prasad was particularly attracted towards religious books in English and works of writers on morals, such as James Allen and Lilly Allen. He also studied Buddhist literature in English. Rajasthani language was of course his family language. He also tried to learn Assamese, Oriya and Tamil languages. He also read gurumukhi books well.

His grandmother Ramkaur Devi's influence was deep and extensive in the educational development of Hanuman Prasad. He was always looking forward to the inspiration, guidance and advice of his grandmother. He was given initiation when he was just eight-year old by Shri Brajdasji who was a disciple of Acharya Mehardasji of Nimbark Sect. He was also given a *Kanthi* of *Tulsi* beads to wear round his neck. He was of course doing daily recitation of *Hanuman Chaalisa* (forty verses on Hanuman) *Hanumatkavach* (the protection provided by god Hanuman) and *Durga Shaptashati* (Seven hundred verses on Durga). Thus we can conclude that the seeds of spiritual aspiration were in him at Ratangarh.

Tradition had taken deep roots in his family. The spirit of Hinduism pervaded it at all levels. Inherent in it was an abiding

sense of high morality and deep devotion. The sacred thread ceremony of Hanuman Prasad was performed when he was just eight-year old. On completion of his 12th year he had to enter wedlock in accordance with the family tradition of child marriage. Marriage was fixed with a girl in Ratangarh itself but as ill luck would have it, the bride fell ill with smallpox and one of her legs was paralysed. Her whole body was also deformed by pock-marks. Her family became worried and began wondering if the engagement would still stand or will fall through. But Ramkaur Devi assured Gurumukh Rai Dhedharia, the father of the girl saying, "word is given only once in such matters and when marriage is fixed with a certain boy, it cannot be broken. I have given my word to marry my grandson to Mahadevi. I cannot go back on my word as long as I live." When Gurumukh had left, Ramkaur Devi asked Hanuman Prasad as to how he felt about the matter. He replied, "what can I say about it? Whatever you will do will always be in my best interest." The marriage was solemnised on the 4th day of Jyeshtha Krishna Paksha of Samvat 1961. Bhimraj too was agreeable to the arrangement. Afterwards, Bhimraj, Ramkaur Devi and the children returned to Calcutta.

Hanuman Prasad became adept not only in all aspects of business through the guidance of his father, Bhimraj, but also cultivated the qualities of truthfulness, sincerity, service, sense of duty, frugality etc. When he learnt the ways of business transaction such as purchase of goods, opening of sales, keeping accounts and collection of outstanding dues etc., his father Bhimraj began to spend most of his time away from day-to-day dealings in the world and in spiritual pursuits. Certain friends used to gather almost daily and Bhimraj was kept exchanging views on religious matters with them. During this period he also established "Sanatan Dharma Pushtikarni Sabha" (An association for strengthening of Sanatan Dharma) and himself became its secretary. Hanuman Prasad collaborated continuously with its activities.

Hanuman Prasad became known as Hanuman Prasad Poddar on growing to manhood. Qualities such as longing for service, purity, character, tolerance and generosity soon became apparent in his personality. Recalling his conduct and affectionate dealings with all whom he loved, the late Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj wrote in the editorial column of 'Pawan Smaran' (Sacred Remembrance), "Hanuman Prasad Poddar is not merely a name but a symbol of a great ideal." He was in fact an embodiment of selfless service and patriotism. His life was dedicated to the love of all humanity. He suffered with those whom he saw suffer and did all that he could for the welfare of humanity. He was always eager to see his own self reflected in all living beings and serve them to the best of his ability. Pt. Kaviraj says further, "A vast multitude of people, who loved and respected him, are to be found in India and abroad. Their number is as large as his large-heartedness." This description of Pt. Gopinath gives us an idea of the goodness and generosity of Hanuman Prasad Poddar and his deep devotion to his friends. There are innumerable instances of his pure love interspersed in various books, articles and essays. We shall like to give a couple of such stories here that show us how very kind he was to his friends and how pure was his living.

Once a person, who was well-versed in English and life-style, came to him. The purpose of his visit was to lodge a strong protest against an article published in the monthly *Kalyan*, ardently advocating performance of *Shradha* ceremony for the dead. The visiting gentleman did not see at all the need for such a ceremony. Poddarji, in reply to his heated arguments, related a personal experience on the condition that the same should not be revealed to anyone else. Poddarji said: "Sir, what you argue is perhaps true, but I write something in *Kalyan* with emphasis only when there are proofs of its truthfulness. It happened around 1925. I was at that time engaged in business at Bombay. I used to go for walks in the evening after dinner at about 8 p.m., and sit on one of the benches at Chowpati sea-shore to do *japa* and contemplate on god. It was a lonely

place and it was dark. This was my daily routine. One day, while I was sitting on the bench with my legs stretched out and was absorbed in my *japa*, I saw a Parsee gentleman standing in the front. He was wearing a white dress. He remained standing there for quite some time, but I continued my *japa* all the while. When some time had gone by, I thought to myself that the gentleman had been standing here for a long time and that I should perhaps ask him to come and sit beside me on the bench. I told him to do so, saying 'you have been standing there for long. Why not come and sit here?', on hearing me, he replied, 'Please do not be afraid. I am a spirit'. As soon as he revealed his identity, I was taken aback. Fear grasped me. I began to sweat. He perhaps realized that I had become afraid. So he said, 'Please do not fear. I shall not do any harm to you. I have in fact approached you for help thinking that you are a holy person. Please be of help to me. It will do you good.' On hearing him, I was a little reassured. He further said, 'if you had not talked to me first, I would not have been able to talk to you, as I have not been given powers to initiate a conversation and can only reply on being spoken to by the beings of this world. Hence I was waiting all this while for you to speak to me.....I belong to the world of spirits. I can go wherever I wish to go and can be seen by anyone. But I cannot speak unless I am first spoken to. I am a Parsee, but I have faith in Hindu Shastras. I died recently. If you can send one to Gaya (a place of pilgrimage in Bihar) to perform 'Pind Dan' (offering to the spirit) ceremony there I shall be liberated from my plight'. On this, I asked him, 'But Shradha is performed in Gaya by the Hindus only. You are a Parsee. Your people have no faith in Shradha. Why are you then talking of this ceremony?'.

The spirit replied, "If a truth is a truth, it transcends all considerations of caste and creed. Caste and creed may differ. This belongs to the domain of conduct here. A being has no caste. He is neither Parsee nor Hindu nor Christian. If a being is destined to become a spirit it will do so, come what may."

I asked him several questions. I have now forgotten most of the replies I got, but still remember the gist of it all. He told me that if someone died with feelings of hostility against anyone, his existence became nightmarish. He suffered great agonies in hell. I asked him if 'hell' actually existed. I was told that it did. He also informed me that it was necessary that relatives and friends of the dead person should always donate grain and offer water for him for use in the world of the spirits. A spirit carries wants and desires with it which are satisfied by such offerings and gifts. He told me several other things of this nature. Then he informed me about his Bombay address. Finally he disappeared. I came back home. I found out his residence the following day. He used to live in Bandra area of Bombay. He had died some six months back. I could find out his name as well as other details. Even though he was a Parsee, he used to read the *Gita*. After gathering all the requisite information, I sent a Brahmin, Hari Ram, to Gaya for 'Shradha' and 'Pind Dan'. Hari Ram performed these rites. The day this was done at Gaya, I saw the Parsee spirit again in Chowpati. He told me, "I have come to express my gratitude to you. I am happy you have done what I had requested you to do. Now I am proceeding from the world of the spirits to higher regions."

On hearing this episode the visitor was greatly moved. He went away a firm believer in *shradha* and *tarpan*. There are innumerable incidents in his active life which will inspire people to lead a pious and religious life. Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj wrote on the passing away of Shri Poddar, "Poddarji had entered the arena of this world with the ideal of service to humanity and a high ethical life and conduct. And at the root of it all was the devotion to worship of the Divine."

Bhaiji devoted himself to the service of saints, *purohits* and *pandits*, literateurs and the poor. This devotion was not peculiar to him, he had inherited it from his father Bhimraj. Bhaiji inherited the ideal first from his elders in the family and developed understanding and consciousness about it later on.

His faith in his ideal was unflinching. Knowledge derived from logic can also be demolished through logic.

Bhaiji's personality went on growing from peak to peak. Pious and studiousness were the two pillars of his mental make-up. Service to the poor and down-trodden and generous hospitality were the other two props of his life. Faith and tolerance were other such supports. His heart was all love; his mind a storehouse of wisdom. He was ever helpful to all.

The list of his friends and favourites was not confined to his family circle only. Everyone, who happened to meet him be he a saint or a sinner, felt at peace. The saint saw in him his own image and the sinner hope for future and deliverance from his present state. He was naturally kind towards younger people and respectful to the elders. He took a vow, while working with his father as an apprentice and under his patronage, that he would keep his life and conduct absolutely pure, do his allotted work quietly, not covet fame and accept no reward whatsoever for his selfless service.

Each event, each action, each journey of Bhaiji's life exemplified dynamic self-sacrifice and idealism. Once, when he was 15 years of age, Bhaiji was going from Calcutta to his mother's home-town Chandpur (East Bengal) by a steamer. Also travelling by the same boat was a Bengali family including a girl aged 13 or 14 and a boy aged five. Bhaiji affectionately gave some dried fruit to the boy. The family disembarked at a place en-route. Bhaiji received a letter after four years from the girl who was travelling with him on the steamer. She wrote that she had been forcibly married to a certain person by her parents, but she in fact loved him and was totally surrendered to him. Hence she intended to leave her husband and she would come and meet him near the Kali temple and remain in his divine company. The girl, Sarojini, after several unsuccessful efforts met Bhaiji in the garb of a Sikh and introduced herself. She proposed marriage to Bhaiji. Bhaiji at once replied: "Devi, I am already married. As such I am helpless and cannot own you, breaking all norms of personal morals and social ethics. But I

appreciate the purity of your love. You may stay here. I shall make all necessary arrangements for your living.”

Bhaiji's reply could not give her any satisfaction, but she said, “I think it will be better if I remain away from you. I shall continue to offer flowers to my love at your feet from a distance.” Before leaving she offered a gold coin to Bhaiji.

A son was born to Mahadeviji in Samvat 1966 at Ratangarh but she herself passed away in the maternity room within a fortnight after giving birth to the child and the child too survived only two months. Bhaiji was in a state of deep depression when he came to Calcutta after performing the last rites of his wife and son. But Swami Jagdishwaranand's sermons and companionship gave him some comfort. In the meanwhile, she also happened to meet another saint Swami Shankaranad Madrasi. This Swami was an adept in Hathyoga and was a believer in the extremist politics along with spirituality.

His contact with this saint began to rouse revolutionary ideas in his mind. He became a firm follower of the Swami. Bhimraj was worried at the political proclivities of his son. So he arranged for his re-marriage so that the tradition of the family and the clan could be protected. Bhaiji entered into the wedlock again in Samvat 1968 with Muvasi Bai, daughter of Seth Mangat Ram of Rajgarh.

About a year after Hanuman Prasad Podder's re-marriage, his father Bhimraj fell seriously ill. He went from Calcutta to Ratangarh for a change of climate, where he passed away in Shravan month of Samvat 1969. Ramkaur Devi was now completely shattered. She lost her eye-sight. Bhaiji returned to Calcutta after performing the last rites of his father. He had now to look after the family business along with his spiritual pursuits. Religion, politics and the sentiments for social service grew gradually stronger and stronger in his life. Selfless and single-minded social service became his abiding obsession. Spirituality got the better of all worldly pursuits. He began to participate in the meetings of various associations and societies in the city of Calcutta. He made a distinctive mark by his soft

manners and ready wit. The Hindu Club, Vaishya Samaj, Hindi Sahitya Parishad, Sahitya Samvardhini Samiti, Bara Bazar Library and Savitri Girls School of Calcutta were particular beneficiaries of his dedicated service. The volunteer corps organised by him did a good job during the Sheetal fair. These were his manifest achievements. But none could have guessed how much was done by him unobtrusively for the benefit of the poor.

He had deep-rooted love for his country. As soon as Lord Curzon announced the division of Bengal on 19 July, 1905 (Samvat 1962), the whole of Bengal rose as one man against the divide and rule policy of the rulers. Innumerable meetings and conferences were organised. Resentment was everywhere. The protest took the form of songs, plays and demonstrations on every street.

A noteworthy incident in this connection may be recalled. Bhaiji came to know that animal fat or tallow was being used to soften and impart shine to foreign clothes. He found this revolting. He began to wear coarse Khadi Dhoti and other hand spun and woven clothes. Even Gandhiji was, till then, wearing foreign clothes. We can thus say that love for Khadi and swadeshi had been born in the heart of Bhaiji even before it took root in Gandhiji's thoughts. Later on, under the leadership of Gandhiji fine Khadi began to be woven. Bhaiji wore pure Khadi throughout his life. From the time of the Congress session in Calcutta in 1906, Bhaiji worked for the independence of the country not as moderate but extremist member of the organisation. Swadeshi movement against the British rulers also gathered speed. Poddarji became member of the secret revolutionary societies of Calcutta and began assisting them with the wealth and man power of the local Marwari society.

During this period Marwari youths had formed a Marwari Sahayata Samiti for social service. It evolved various ways to alleviate the suffering of the people. Later on this society was named Marwari Relief Society. Marwari youths also constituted a society for furthering literacy pursuits. It propagated healthy

literature. Its objective was to develop the mental faculties of the people. Among its publications was a translation of the *Gita*. It was edited by the well-known editor Baburao Vishnu Paradkar. Hundreds of copies of the work were distributed among the agitating people. British rulers were flabbergasted. According to the *Gita* one ought to resort to fight for a pious cause. The *Gita* became particularly the favourite reading among the anti-British revolutionaries. Bhaiji took keen interest in the formation of the literary society, Sahitya Samvardhini Sabha. The British regime had been shaken by the publication of this *Gita*. Consequently all the unsold copies of the book were proscribed.

But the strength of the exploited increases in proportion to the tyranny of the exploiter. Gradually the *Gita* became the holy scripture of the revolutionaries and the rebels. All of them prepared themselves to wage war against the Britishers like Arjuna after reading the *Gita*. "Free yourself from passions and jump into the fray." Hanuman Prasad Poddar got a version of the *Gita* published through Sahitya Samvardhini Sabha. It had on its cover a picture of Mother India with sword in hand. Poddarji's faith in the *Gita* became further strengthened by his association with Shri Jaya Dayal Goendka. Later on, these two devotees joined hands to establish the Gita Press.

Bhaiji was attracted towards politics and ethical life in equal measure. His interest in literary work continued to grow. The contact with the then editor of the Modern Review, Ramanand Chatterji and Poet Rabindranath Tagore resulted in his pursuing religion, politics and literature even more vigorously. Calcutta was in those days a centre of Hindi literature. He also studied Bengali and English in depth. He came in touch with several eminent journalists in the course of his participation in the Swadeshi movement. Among them were Brahmabodh Upadhyaya, editor of *Sandhya*, Pt. Girishpati Kavyatirtha, Mr. Shyam Sunder Chakraverti, the well-known Bangalore author, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, editor of *Bharat Mitra*, Babu Balmukund Gupta and his witty friend

Pt. Jagannath Prasad Chatruvedi, journalist Laxmi Narain Garde, the printer of *Calcutta Samachar*, Pt. Bhawarmalji etc. Pt. Jagannath Prasad Chatruvedi was the secretary of Hindi Sahitya Parishad and Lipi Vistar Parishad was formed under the chairmanship of justice Sarada Charan Mitra.

Calcutta was in those days the main centre of national activities. Bhaiji was in contact with almost all social and national organisations. He was busy serving the nation through a number of organisations. Mahatma Gandhi returned from South Africa at about that time in 1915. Bhaiji welcomed him on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha. When Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya visited Calcutta on behalf of the Hindu University, the Marwari community under the influence of Bhaiji donated liberally for the cause. Malviyaji had to face some disappointment initially till he met Bhaiji. Malviyaji soon became very friendly with Bhaiji. He later placed his son Radhakant under the guardianship of Bhaiji and whenever he visited Gorakhpur he stayed with Bhaiji when the latter had shifted to that place. When Rajarshi Purushottamdas Tandon visited Calcutta in connection with the work of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Bhaiji arranged for his stay and lectures etc. Tandonji and Bhaiji came very close to each other.

So far as the spiritual qualities of Bhaiji are concerned, it can be said that his friends, well wishers, disciples, (not in a sectarian sense), dependents and admirers could be found not only in the country but all over the world.

Bhaiji had developed a dislike for the glamour of the life at Calcutta and Bombay. His heart was completely surrendered to Vishnu. He was looking for a solitary spot where he could devote himself to spiritual practices. Shri Gambhir Chand Pujari, a close collaborator of Bhaiji advised him to go to Gorakhpur and reorganise the Gita Press there. Bhaiji agreed, though his idea had been to look for a place on the banks of the Ganga. He went to Gorakhpur and took charge of the Gita Press and the religious monthly magazine, *Kalyan*. In Bombay, where he had been for some time, all the friends and colleagues

of Bhaiji began to miss his presence. Hardly had he been in Gorakhpur for a fortnight when his close friends sent him a message recalling him to Bombay immediately, to help them sort out some of their business problems. Bombay life again threatened to entrap him but Bhaiji did not stay there long and came back to Gorakhpur. This incident was narrated by Bhaiji himself in the context of the temptations of Bombay life. He said, "About 10 or 15 days after my coming to Gorakhpur I went to Bombay for some urgent work. Shri Jamnalal Bajaj himself came to see me there and told me that Bapuji (Mahatma Gandhi) wanted me to stay at Bombay and not to go to Gorakhpur or any other place. If, however, I did not like to live in Bombay, I could go elsewhere and work with him as people like me were required by the country. I told him I was not inclined to work anywhere else. Shri Jamnalal Bajaj obtained a promise from me that wherever I worked I should consult him first and not to do anything without his consent. I agreed to his affectionate proposal and gave him my word that if I felt inclined to undertake some work anywhere I would definitely inform him. There was still more temptation to face. On receiving the news of my visit to Bombay, Shri Ram Narain Rahaya came to meet me. He was a prominent businessman. He owned 3-4 mills. He used to live in Lonavla near Pune. He had his business in Bombay. He was much advanced in age. He came to me and told me, "Bhaiji, look at me. I am old now, I have 3-4 sons. But they have still not learnt how to run the business. Please be their guardian. You will be offered a lakh of rupees per annum. There will be a bungalow and a car at your disposal. You have to do nothing but look after these boys." I told him, "I am not bothered about money. But I cannot accept your affectionate offer. I am a mere child to you. But I do not intend either to live in Bombay or to take up any work. I want to be in Gorakhpur for some time to bring out *Kalyan*. Afterwards I want to live on the banks of the Ganga and devote myself to spiritual pursuits." Shri Rahayaji was convinced by my submission and he went away. Bhaiji's distaste for mundane

possessions had made him known as a Mahatma. He had now no time to devote to worldly pursuits. He was totally and completely absorbed in the remembrance of the Holy Name, the pursuit of the Divinity. Bhaiji's sentiments can be described by a verse in Marwari which says:

I have no use for anything else now
Thou and Thou alone art in my thoughts
My heart pines for Thee and Thee alone
Even if Thou torment me
I shall not give Thee up
I will not look to anyone else for solace
With Thee alone shall I join my heart.

Passing through a multiplicity of hectic events and spiritual practices, Bhaiji's physical body gradually began to show signs of decay.

Bhaiji suddenly fell seriously ill. On 22 April, 1969 at Rishikesh there appeared a growth in his stomach in the vicinity of the gall bladder resulting in fits of excruciating pain. When the pain subsided the growth also disappeared. The syndrome reoccured and caused much inconvenience when he happened to be travelling. Doctors suspected gall-stone but it could not be clinically established. On 4 November 1970, the malady was further aggravated and the pain became more frequent.

This made the doctors wonder whether Bhaiji was not suffering from cancer. From 16 February 1971, Bhaiji began to show symptoms of loss of blood and jaundiced condition. The growth became hard. He felt difficulty in respiration. Friends and doctors were worried.

Bhaiji tried to comfort them. He told them: "You visit me out of love and I on my part let you examine me and take such drugs as you prescribe. When your examinations reveal something serious, you become worried and start whispering. But I am not at all worried by the seriousness of my disease. It is my firm belief that whatever is destined will happen. Why then cry

over it? Death will come when it has to come. Why then to die before it actually comes through worry and fear? You are doing whatever you can for me and I am also taking medicines regularly. The disease will disappear in its own good time, if it is so willed. If it has to grow, it will grow. You are providing the very best treatment according to your lights. Even then the disease is growing. Pain is severe. But my inner self is full of joy. It is feeling the presence of God along with the pain. Pain and suffering remind you of God.” Bhaji would tell the doctors, “Treatment of the sick who visit you is in fact adoration of God.”

The doctors listening to him, forgot who was the physician and who the patient. They had the feeling that their own spiritual ailments were being healed. Men of God whether well or ill have this effect on people. For it is the body that falls ill, not the soul. We have identified ourselves with our physical body. Hence we fall ill when our body falls ill. Besides, our thinking has a deep effect on our body and health. A French physician writes: “I went to visit a patient in his room. I found him practically recovered. I told him so and asked him to get his medical history for my perusal. At about the same time another of my patients fell seriously ill. I went to examine him. I found him in a critical condition. I got his medical report ready immediately and wrote in conclusion that there was no chance of his recovery and he ought to prepare his will if he so desired. I gave this report to my assistant. The assistant made a mistake in despatching the report. He sent the report of the man whose death was imminent, to the person who was almost cured. When the latter saw from the report that he was to pass away soon, he got a terrible shock. The members of his family were greatly disturbed at his condition. They rushed to my hospital to ask me to visit their relative. They informed me that the patient’s condition had worsened after receiving the report. I asked for the report and as soon as I looked at it I saw the mistake and explained to his relatives. I told them that there is nothing wrong with the patient. I also sent for the right

report from the hospital immediately and showed it to them. When the patient knew about it his symptoms disappeared. Such is the impact of thought over the body.”

Moved by the affection of the doctors Bhaiji said to them, “Yours efforts are not bearing fruit. But do not get upset. You are really so loveable. This gives me great strength.” At that moment Bhaiji’s bodily pain was acute. He could not eat anything. He was administered glucose. Bhaiji then offered his prayers to the Divine and told the doctors: “I have seen and heard several cases when heartfelt and sincere prayer has been answered. Everything is possible for the Almighty. I do not however, wish that all of you here should pray for me. Let me face my destiny. I am not this body. I am indeed the soul. No harm accrues to the soul when the body departs. Pain is experienced in the body. You should not worry and you should stop the medication from tomorrow. Then, whatever is to happen will happen. Why should we pray at all to change the course of events that God has ordained? If we pray the prayer ought to be that Thy will be done.”

Death is unconquerable. Nature is inflexible. Destiny is all powerful. Bhaiji’s body gradually advanced towards final extinction. Doctors were of the opinion that surgery was necessary and he should be moved out of town. But Bhaiji told Dr. Chakraverti of Gita Vatika, “I do not consider the body so important. If it is destined to perish, it will perish. We have a duty towards its upkeep only till it lasts.” Dr. Chakraverti replied in Bengali, “We feel pain only because we feel that we are the body. If we are detached from the sense of body no pain can be felt.” Bhaiji refused to be moved out. He said, “The question of moving out can be considered only if the best possible treatment is not available here. God will illumine my path through your affection for me. We ought certainly to make use of the best available resources in the world, but our firm faith should rest in Divine dispensation. I think we should not take impure drugs like insulin under any circumstances even if we have to give up our body.”

As a result of several such arguments on the part of Bhaiji, the idea of taking to some other place for operation was dropped. On 6 March 1971, he experienced shooting pain. He was given injections to alleviate the pain. doctors felt helpless. Looking at the Bengali doctor Lahiri and others Bhaiji recalled the following words of the Divine:

I shall not listen to what you say
I shall not grant what you ask
I shall do what I will
For in that lies your real welfare.

On 7 March, Bhaiji told his friends and relatives: "I have not done any harm to anyone nor ever thought of doing so since I became conscious of my existence. I have tried to see Divinity reflected in everything. Sometimes I have succeeded in this effort and sometime failed. But I have no enemy at all. If my body feels pain, I experience it. But inwardly, I am full of joy."

About a week passed in this condition. On 13 March, when Dr. Chakraverti was at his bedside Bhaiji told him, "Whatever you are doing is service to the Divine. And those who serve the Divine attain Him." Then he spoke of the deep affection of his friends and relatives and said, "Shri Goswamiji (Chiman Lal ji) is doing all that I would have done since he came here. I have become his adviser."

On 14 March, his pulse, breathing and heart-beat became erratic. He told the doctor: "I can still think clearly. Memory at times functions well, on other occasions not so well. I am finding it difficult to speak." Saying so he motioned to ask the doctor if he had taken food or not. His nature remained unaffected even on the verge of death. The nature of pious persons remains unchanged even during last moments of their lives. God's will is supreme. It appeared as if the disease had given him a lease of life again for a week. During all these days, he continued the *japa* of the Holy Name as usual. He had unflinching faith in *japa*. He had practical experience of its efficacy.

Came 22 March. All sat silent. Bhaiji somehow raised his folded and trembling hands up and bade good-bye with a last hiccup and vomiting of blood. Bhaiji's soul departed from its physical sheath. Even in his last sleep, the last rest, the last journey to the heavenly abode his face was aglow with his usual joy and his right hand raised in obeisance was indicative of his great compassion for all. Thus passed away the renowned editor of *Kalyan* whose mission throughout his life was to serve others, who was faithful to non-violence, who was a nationalist, a writer, a poet and above-all a great man.

II

Pious Conduct and Satsang

MAN'S LIFE and this physical world is a strange riddle. Fate, Karma, Divinity, Time—all are rapt in a mystery that remains unresolved. But it does appear that man's nature carries within it the impressions of his earlier life as also the result of actions of the present existence. This could be seen clearly in the purity of Bhaiji's life. His humane qualities were in a great measure inborn. They could not all be acquired or cultivated.

One is reminded of the following observations of the poet Bharavi about the epic poet Vyas when one thinks of the manifold attributes of Bhaiji's inner as well as outer personality.

“His appearance was calm and was a reflection of the quietude of his inner self. Looking at his confident and composed face, one felt as if one had met him and spoken to him.”

Bhaiji's inner and outer self was of just this kind. The only difference was that while Vyas's complexion was bluish, Bhaiji's was whitish. There was a glow on his face. His looks were full of compassion and a smile played on his lips, all the time. His forehead with tilak imprinted, exuded grandeur. He used to apply tilak as a mark of adoration for Radha and Krishna. He was always dressed in spotless Khadi that signified his purity and patriotic spirit.

There was no rigidity or lack of system in his daily routine. He was a pure Vaishnava, a devotee of Radha-Madhava,

a saint dedicated to the service of the poor. He rose early in the morning around 3 or 4, did his *japa* for a while on the bed itself, then after his morning ablutions did some yogic exercises and practised breath control. All this ended at about 7.30 a.m. Then began the worship of Radha—Krishna followed by the daily readings of the *Ramayana* and the *Gita* and editing of *Kalyan*. He also composed some religious verses daily. Breakfast was at about 9. By this time quite a large number of people would gather to meet him. If someone had individual problem, he would talk to him separately. Otherwise, all sat together and talked about God and the religious pursuits or talked of literature and some time was devoted towards the care of those who came and stayed in the Gita Vatika. He kept a small rosary of *tulasi* or *rudraksha* beads in a cloth bag and counted beads all the time. He had made *japa* a part of his nature. He had in fact succeeded in adopting the method of 'Ajapa Japa' or repetition of the Holy Name within oneself even in unconscious moments.

Lunch at about noon was simple and plain. After rest for about an hour or half an hour, he would read or write something and reply to the personal letters received in connection with the magazine *Kalyan*. Then he turned his attention to the management of the magazine and the press.

This went on till about 5 p.m. Again there would be visitors, including those who had personal problems. Bhaiji would listen to everyone and satisfy all through consoling words or in other possible ways.

If there happened to be a saintly person staying in the Vatika, he would request him to give a talk. Swami Chakradhar (Radha Baba) used to deliver discourses almost daily. Devotional music and *Kirtan* etc. was held at 8 p.m. Bhaiji did meditation and *japa* before going to bed at the night, which was around 10 p.m. This was Bhaiji's usual routine.

Every moment of his life, every breath of his being was spent in some religious act. We may say that he was a saint in thought, word and deed. Impure thoughts never entered his mind. Helping people was an integral part of his God-worship.

He was always prepared to bear any difficulty for the sake of others. All forms of gods and goddesses were, according to him, the symbols of the same Divinity. He revered all of them. Rosary, Bells, Conch, Postures—all had a place in his spiritual pursuits.

There was no rigidity in his daily routine. If there was some suffering person needing his help, he would at once make necessary changes in his routine and provide the help. Here is a poem composed by Bhaiji that throws light on his daily routine:

Let us worship the Divine in accordance with our faith,
 Let us recite the Vedas and repeat the *Gayatri* from which
 flows all welfare.
 Let us read Saptashati, worship Rudra, do *japa*,
 remember Narayan to conquer Death.
 Let us repeat Gajendra Moksha (Deliverance of the
 Elephant King) and organize Bhagwat Path Week.
 Let us read Valmiki *Ramayana* and *Ram Charit Manas* of
 Tulsidas with sincerity.
 Let us be absorbed in devotional singing and Kirtan with
 full sincerity.
 Let us give jwar, cotton-seeds and other animal feed for
 cows,
 Let us make a gift of the cows to the Brahmans.
 Let us offer grains with open heart to the hungry and the
 needy.
 Let us do such deeds as may alleviate the sufferings of the
 afflicted.
 Let us help poor widows and students and let it not be
 known to anyone else.
 Let us dig wells so that all may drink cool water from them.
 Let Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs—all worship God in their own
 ways.
 Let Christians and followers of other religions offer prayers
 according to their light.
 Let us do good deeds again and again and inspire others
 to do the same everywhere.

These are the bases of peace and goodwill and happiness.
Bhaiji also laid down do's and dont's in his another poem:

Give up ill-feelings, untruth, sarcasm, harsh words.
Sing praises of the Divine, repeat His name with
devotion.
Banish all desire, anger, temptation
Always recollect His name, His form, His deeds,
His abode.
Abandon all food that is impure and arouses
ill-feeling and is taken just for taste
Set aside taste and eat pure and wholesome food
Let your dress be simple, conduct above board,
life unassuming.
Be delivered from wants and hankerings and serve
always the poor and the needy
Keep away from the company of the worldly and the
indulgent
Keep company with the saintly and the good
Give up all worthless acts flowing from the desire
for physical and mental gratification.
Be detached and patient even in the face of formidable
difficulties, consider it all the play of your Lord
Let the love for Radha—Krishna be the sole aim of
your life.

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar's life was a dedicated life of a *Bhakta* or devotee. He considered the entire world as permeated with Brahma or Lord Krishna. And so every bit and every human being in this world was an object of his worship. He was extremely generous, helpful and philanthropic person. If a person is not tired of entertaining his guests and visitors under any condition, if he not only receives them with open heart but considers them as forms of his Lord, if he serves them not for a day or a month but throughout life, he indeed is a really generous person.

Among Bhaiji's visitors was a Mahatma, we would like to mention particularly, who came to him in 1938. He was known as Radha Baba Sanyasi. He was called Baba as he had given up all worldly pursuits. He began his worship first of Shri Krishna and Radha, and then of Radha-Krishna, and finally of Radha only in whom he saw epitomized all godliness and so concentrated all his faith. That is why people began to call him Radha Baba. He was well-versed in Sanskrit, English, Urdu, Bengali, Marathi and many other languages. His physical appearance had an ascetic glow of its own. He was eloquent of speech. A Mahatma with a spiritual halo, Bhaiji was drawn to him. Swami Chakradharji Radha Baba was born in Fakharpur village of Gaya district in the year 1912. He began to take part in revolutionary activities while studying in the college. He was also jailed. The English jailor was harsh and cruel and used to beat prisoners. When he received such beating, he would repeat the Holy Name. This gave him solace. On being released from imprisonment, he became a sanyasi. He met Swami Ram Sukh Dasji in the year 1936 at Govind Bhawan, Calcutta. On his suggestion Baba Chakradhar went to Bankura to meet Jaya Dayal Goendka. Shri Goendka was at that time busy writing a commentary on the *Gita*. Baba Chakradhar was still at that time a staunch Vedanti. He had heated exchanges with Goendkaji on certain aspects of Vedanta. Goendkaji advised Babaji to go to Gorakhpur and meet Hanuman Prasad Poddar, who would dispel many of his doubts. Babaji at once proceeded to Gorakhpur and met Bhaiji. The meeting of Poddarji and Babaji was an event of extraordinary spiritual significance. They assessed each other. Babaji's Vedanta had a flavour of Bhaiji's Bhakti (devotion). The Formless had a rendezvous with Form. The Brahman with attributes had a get-together with the Brahman *sans* attributes. Bhaiji and Babaji exchanged views from time to time. This was the period when Babaji's Vedanta began to retransform into the devotion for Radha—Krishna. The dryness and inflexibility of dogmatic discussions began to yield to the divine blessing of Bhakti. Babaji was gradually

attracted more and more towards Bhaiji who was an embodiment of Bhakti. Babaji shifted to Bhaiji's garden to live near him. A separate cottage was constructed for him there. Both the Mahatmas began to enjoy the blissful and affectionate contact of each other. Spiritual affinity between them became so intense that it was decided by them that the person who survived the other would not go away leaving behind the Samadhi of his *co-sadhak*. Bhaiji gave up his body in 1971 and Babaji, who is still in that garden, makes his obeisance every day to Bhaiji's Samadhi there. The Vedantic glow of Babaji merged completely in the Vaishnava Bhakti of Bhaiji. The guests and visitors even today receive the same welcome as in Bhaiji's days in Gita Vatika. Babaji's benediction and his kindness can still be felt in the Vatika. The poor, the afflicted and the persons beset with problems still go to Gita Vatika in Gorakhpur to receive the blessings of Babaji.

Babaji's ascetic practices are extremely tough and unyielding. Yet he is kindness itself as a Mahatma. People began to address this worshipper of Radha as Radha Baba. Bhaiji used to revere him as a great saint and scholar. He considered him a great asset. Radha Baba is an adept in music too.

Shri Poddar's life is as inspiring for individual uplift as for the good of the entire community of man. Even as he was absorbed in the spiritual practices of a *Sanyasi* in all their ramifications, he was no less conscious of the welfare of the people in general. Bhaiji used to welcome guests and visitors as various forms of his God. 'A guest is a form of God'—this old saying was translated in full in his daily life and conduct.

He had taken a vow to give joy to all and not to displease anyone. He felt happy only when he made others happy. Bhaiji used to receive a large number of personal letters in which people laid bare their hearts to him. They wrote about many confidential details also of their life. Bhaiji was particular about replying to all such letters himself. People of all faiths, creeds and political parties used to go to see Bhaiji and narrate their problems freely and frankly. All of them used to go away with

their problems satisfactorily solved. Even when someone dropped in to see him when he was to attend to the daily chores such as bath or worship or food, he set aside the routine and gave priority to the meeting with the visitor. Visitors came and went. Some became permanent residents. And in time they became close friends of Bhaiji. When Shri Radha Baba came in contact with Bhaiji and established himself in Gita Vatika, he came to occupy a worshipful corner in Bhaiji's heart, as is seen from the following account of poet Dinkar. On 27 March 1971, when Dinkarji went to Gorakhpur for floral offerings to the Samadhi of Poddarji, he happened to meet Radha Baba there. He enquired of the Baba as to why was Poddarji cremated in Gita Vatika and not on the banks of river? Baba told him, "In 1939, I sought his consent to go to Vrindavan. His reply was that we ought to live here together. I could go anywhere I chose on his expiry. If I died before his passing away, he would, of course, perform my last rites. Upon this, I told Bhaiji, we have been together for so long. If you will leave your body first, why should I go anywhere else? I will spend the rest of my life at the site where your body is cremated. This, then, was my resolution. If Bhaiji had been cremated on the banks of a river, I would have lived there. Therefore, friends decided that it ought to be cremated in Gita Vatika so that I could carry out my resolve and live near by. Dinkarji was greatly moved at the depth of feelings of Babaji for Bhaiji.

Bhaiji was extremely faithful and devoted to visitors and guests. Here is what Kapindraji, a devotee of Lord Rama says : "Once he invited me for Radhashtami Festival. I was happy to accept the invitation. When I went to bid him good-bye, he accompanied me for a distance. I told him 'numerous people visit this place. You must be feeling disturbed by such visits.' " Hearing this, he was in tears and told me, 'No, sir! All these visitors give me great joy. If I commit some sins inadvertently, the *Darshan* of all these visitors washes away all my sins. I feel, in fact, indebted to all of them and shall continue feeling so all my life.' As he went on, his tears continued to flow. I too,

could not help shedding tears. Once, Bhaiji had visited Delhi. I went to see him. I offered, pranam and sat down. He requested me to sit on the cushion with him. I told him, "But I am younger to you." He asked me, 'How?' I said, "Sitting in front brings monetary gain." Hearing this, he turned his face towards other side and said, "Now you can come over on the cushion." I did so, and he had a hearty laugh.

Visitors of Bhaiji always felt an inner peace in his presence. He had the knack of making them feel at ease. He was entirely free from hypocrisy. Dr. Rajbali Pandeya has described this trait of his nature in the following words, "His delivery was sweet and attractive. There was always an aura of fine sentiments, love and good-will about him."

He was always sensitive about his guests' problems. He was ever their friend. In Tulsidas's words "He considers his Himalayan sufferings as akin to a particle of dust, but his friend's miniscule troubles as of Himalayan dimensions." Pt. Mangalji Uddhavaji Shastri has narrated a moving episode in this connection. He says, "We met for the last time on 27 April 1968 at 10 A.M. It was a memorable meeting. After visiting the pilgrim Centre of Hardwar, I went to Gita Bhawan in Rishikesh. I told the manager of the Ashram that the purpose of my visit was to see Bhaiji, and that I would go back to Hardwar the same day. So, a meeting ought to be arranged early. The manager replied that Bhaiji was not keeping well and would not meet anyone. I told him that I was aware of his illness but how could a younger brother go back without meeting his elder brother? I requested him to inform Bhaiji. If Bhaiji wanted to see me, I would meet him, otherwise, I would not insist. As soon as Bhaiji came to know of my presence there, he consented to see me even though he was unwell, and embraced me. And he spoke to me in Gujarati." There are innumerable such instances of his goodness and generosity. To him, hospitality meant Bhakti or devotion. He used to go into such minor details about the guests as: What food is being cooked for him? Has the pulse been cleaned? Is the flour fresh?

Has the rice been washed? Has pickle been procured? Will the food be ready in time? Have the plates and bowls been properly rinsed? Has the guest been comfortably accommodated? Has he sufficient money for his return journey? If not, has it been arranged or not? If any change was called for at short notice, it was immediately made.

Throughout his life Bhaiji strove for attainment of Truth. This Truth might be God or derived from the sacred books or from the company of Saints. His life was devoted to reading sacred books or writing them and keeping company with the good and the great. Saints and Mahatmas used to visit his home since the times of his father and grandfather. Bhaiji had inherited the love for God as for Truth since his birth. Purity of instincts was inherent in his blood. Gita Vatika was ever a place where saints and ascetics gathered. No saint was ever greater or lesser in the estimate of Bhaiji. Mere apparel or word was not of so much importance for him as the conduct of a person. Only a person of high conduct was considered by him as a saint and a *Mahatma* and he was always looking forward to the visit of such a saint, to his place. To Bhaiji, *Bhakta* was as much an object of worship as Bhagwan or God himself. Says Bhagwan Shankar in *Padma Puran*:

If a person worships God and not his devotees, he ought to be considered a hypocrite. He just pretends to be a *Bhakta*, but is not.

Bhaiji was a sincere worshipper of saints and devotees, as he was of God. It was this trait in his character that attracted saints to his Gita Vatika in Gorakhpur. Saints of all creeds and shades of belief used to gather there. Bhaiji used to touch their feet and make their stay comfortable in every way through his personal efforts. He considered worshippers of formless God or God with form, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and even Parsi and Christian saints as worthy of reverence. A person might be Hindu or Muslim, if he was a true devotee of God, he was an object of Bhaiji's worship and devotion. If Gita Vatika was a veritable abode of saints, the monthly magazine *Kalyan*, was a

medium for disseminating saintly ideas and ideals and Bhaiji's heart a temple dedicated to the devotees of God and everyone of his deeds, a mirror of saintly conduct. Bhaiji was equally considerate towards the poor and the afflicted and was ever ready to serve them. The range of his dedication to the Divine extended from the individual to the nation to the entire creation. Bhaiji suffered acute pain at the foreign rule over the holy land as much as any other political leader. He participated in the movements for independence of his motherland. He was directly associated with the movements on partition of Bengal and Swadeshi, and himself took a vow of Swadeshi. Bhaiji participated in the Congress Session of Calcutta in 1906 as a member when he was merely 15 years of age. An undeclared war had started since then between the British rulers and the Indian people. On the one hand was Mahatma Gandhi directing his non-violent, non-cooperation movement on the political stage, and on the other the intensely patriotic revolutionaries proclaiming their message of a bloody revolution. They had faith in the use of arms. Bhaiji had connections with both the types of the movements for the emancipation of the country. Calcutta was, in those days, a centre of revolutionary activities and a battlefield for the struggle for independence. Hence top leaders of the country used very often to visit that city. The local social organizations received them, arranged for their speeches and presented to them addresses of welcome and money to carry on the freedom struggle. Foremost among such organizations was Marwari Sahayak Samiti of Lilloah. Such functions were generally organised under its auspices only. Next was the Hindu Mahasabha. Hanuman Prasad Poddar had close links with both the organizations.

In addition to this, when Mahatma Gandhi came back from South Africa in 1915, Bhaiji welcomed him on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha as its Secretary. He also came in contact with Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He was greatly impressed by the personality and activities of Subhas Chandra Bose although he did not

come in direct contact with him. He received the affectionate attention of the great patriot and Yogi, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. He came in close contact with Mahatma Gandhi, too. Those days, the British rulers were very much apprehensive of the revolutionaries of Calcutta. They were penalized in various ways. Bhaiji extended full co-operation during the trial of the revolutionaries. His name, therefore, found a place in the list of the rebels in police diaries.

About six years after the well-known Manik Talla Bomb case of Calcutta, the next important revolutionary activity was Roda Case of 1914. The Roda Company of Calcutta used to import firearms and ammunition from foreign countries. Revolutionaries got the scent of it and they began to prepare plans to get hold of the arms. They were successful in getting delivery of the consignment addressed to the company. This created a great furore and an investigation was ordered. The revolutionaries distributed the arms and ammunition among themselves. Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar and Pt. Baburao Vishnu Paradkar, Editor of *Aj*, had a direct hand in hiding the cartridges in safe places. Soon, Bhaiji's name was included in the police list of the revolutionaries of Bengal. He was arrested on charges of treason, alongwith three of his companions, on 10 July 1914 and was confined for a fortnight in Duranda House Prison. A case was then filed in the court and Bhaiji alongwith his companions, was transferred to Alipur Jail. All his friends and acquaintances were now afraid of visits to his house and avoided such visits. They also began to move out of their houses or burnt the literature given to them by Bhaiji. Bhaiji used to get all this information while in prison, but he was not surprised at these happenings.

The case for treason fell through in the end owing to paucity of evidence. But the Governor, on the advice of his counsellors, sent Bhaiji and other revolutionaries for further confinement at Shimlapal in Bankura district. Bhaiji was held incommunicado in the house of one Adhar Chandra Roy. The village Shimlapal is about 24 miles from Bankura town. A good library was avail-

able at Shimlapal; through the efforts of the local post master, Bhaiji gradually read all the books available there. All the officials were greatly impressed by the gentle behaviour of Bhaiji. They permitted his wife to come and live with him at Shimlapal. Both Bhaiji and his life-partner made full use of their confinement for intensifying their spiritual practices and pursuits. Bhaiji also advanced his studies in the fields of literature, culture and religion.

Gradually, Bhaiji came in close contact with Tilak and Gandhiji. He also met Maharaja Scindia during that period. Tilak breathed his last in August 1920. Bhaiji was with him during the last moments of his life.

Bhaiji had a great faith in Khadi. He made a bonfire of foreign clothes. He started the practice of Khadi being worn at weddings in Marwari families.

Thus, Bhaiji took a prominent part in all campaigns for the freedom of the country. When freedom was attained, Bhaiji concentrated all his efforts on his spiritual pursuit. He had so far suffered prison-terms for the sake of the nation. He was now dedicated to imprisoning his desires for the sake of the emancipation of the soul. The world at large now crystallized itself into pure consciousness of the Supreme. Bhaiji was now a detached soul, a Bhakta, since all trammels of physical attractions had disappeared. Even when Bhaiji was engaged in patriotic activities, his heart was ever fixed on the Divine. When in jail he experienced several miracles of the *japa* of the Holy Name. He loved this world because he saw it as the creation of his Lord and permeated with Him. He heard the notes of the flute of Lord Krishna in the happenings all around him.

A Model Family Man and a Recluse Saint

Rare are the persons who can take care of their mundane family as well as spiritual family. There are some who show an indifferent attitude towards their relatives and family members but are very particular to attend to the needs of others. On the other hand, there are people who consider their family

as the pivot of all their activities. Their entire energy is directed towards its needs and welfare. There are others who make no distinction between 'our' and 'their'. Everyone, be he a relative or friend, Harijan or Girijan, is equal in the eyes of such saintly souls. Mrs. Savitribai Seksaria writes about Bhaiji, "He belonged to one and all. He was everybody's *Babuji*, *Bhaiji* or *Nanaji*. He infused life in all depressed souls. He was the moving spirit of Gita Vatika." The noted Hindi Scholar Pt. Sitaram Chaturvedi has written, "He was never heard speaking harshly to anyone. He was an embodiment of sweetness and courtesy. Whosoever came in contact with him was invariably impressed by his gentle behaviour. He used to give full consideration to everyone's point of view, and then politely analysed it most logically and authentically. None ever saw him insisting on his own point of view. His speeches and writings were wholly free of bitterness. Alongwith this gentleness, one could see how much depth of wisdom there was in him because of which he was never unbalanced. Never did he become a victim of wrath or get agitated over any matter. He used to run his family affairs also with the same equanimity and saintliness. He was equally attentive to the needs of his family and the families of the poor and the suffering humanity. He did not make any distinction between the two. It has often been observed that Indian ascetics keep affectionate relations with all others in society, but if a member of their own family comes to see them, they chide him and turn him out as they consider him as a disturbing factor for their spiritual pursuits. They will spend months at a stretch with other families with perfect detachment but their own families will remain deprived of their love and affection. One wonders why it should be so. The love of a detached saint does not make any distinction between 'mine' and 'yours'. Since Bhaiji had cultivated such an attitude, he was widely respected in and out of his home."

Bhaiji's daughter, son-in-law, wife and other members of his family loved him dearly. The grief expressed by his son-in-law, Shri Parmeshwar Prasad Phogla, is heart-rending indeed. He

writes in his reminiscences, "When I entered in my youthful days gorgeously dressed for wed-lock in the premises of Ratangarh Haveli, I was at once attracted towards Babaji clad in spotless Khadi robes. I was so overwhelmed that I felt like consecrating my all to him and my heart was filled with boundless bliss. For the first time in my life I realised the significance of pure love. Another lasting impression on my heart was of a loving father embracing his daughter and shedding tears at the prospect of her departure for her new home. I was virtually drowned in the ocean of love. I bent down in deep reverence to touch his feet when Babaji blessed me with his hand, placed affectionately on my head. Since then and till this moment, no words can suffice to describe the affection Babaji has been bestowing on me. I found politics, spirituality and family-life all integrated in the thread of his love." Shri Vidya Niwas Misra has assessed the personality of Bhaiji in the following words: "He kept aloof from politics and yet he had affectionate relations with political leaders, thanks to his utter simplicity of life. He was successful in bringing Mahatmas of all types together. Bhaiji was an asset to this organization. He had confidence in others and exuded confidence himself. He showered affection on the workers of Gita Press as if they belonged to his own family. Everyone bathed in the shower of his Love." Shri Vishambhar Sahai Premi, while delineating the above trait of Bhaiji's character, says, "Bhaiji considered even the most menial of his workers as a collaborator and not a subordinate. He gave full respect to the persons working in different departments of Gita Bhawan. He used to say that he was as much a worker of Gita Press as others working there. They were not his employees but the employees of the organization in which they worked. It is not usual these days to maintain such a sense of equality. We got angry at even the smallest thing with our employees and consider them as our paid servants. But Poddarji used to consider them as his colleagues. That is why they also used to bow down to him in obeisance."

Bhaiji used to deal with persons of different types and different ideals with great affection. He was well-known for his love and respect for others and made them feel important. Dr. Bhuwaneshwar Misra Madhawa writes in this connection, "Although Bhaiji was a pure traditional Vaishnava, he had immense respect for all creeds and religions. He was entirely free from politics, and so could count socialists, communists and congressites of all shades among his friends. Some of them proclaimed themselves even atheists, although Bhaiji used to say that no one could be an atheist. He was never after name and fame. The British Government wanted to honour him with the title of 'Rai Bahadur' and later knighthood. The late Pt. G.B. Pant also wanted to confer 'Bharat Ratna' on him and nominate him for the Rajya Sabha, but Bhaiji politely refused the offer. There could hardly be a greater instance of detachment and freedom from desire. He was a sincere house-holder as well as ascetic saint."

It was a treat to observe the feelings of respect and love each member of his family had for him. No words can describe the mutual affection and consideration the members of the family had for each other.

Bhaiji had inherited all the traits of a saint and a Yogi from his father, brother and maternal grandfather. He did not deprive his family of the profuse love that he showered on the members of the human society just because it was his personal family. It is this trait that makes a man really great. There was a natural blossoming in him of great human ideals so rarely found in a majority of ascetics engaged in spiritual pursuits. It ought to be considered a consequence of the good deeds he had done through the cycle of birth and existence.

III

His Faith and Conviction

HANUMAN PRASAD Poddar had inflexible faith in God. His entire life was a paean of devotion. He saw the Lord manifested in every movable and immovable object. That is why Bhaiji never showed disrespect to anyone and anything. His faith was all-embracing. The source of his faith was God-realization. When the Supreme Being is the sole cause of the existence and disappearance of this universe, why look on any of His forms with hostility. All of us belong to the Divine and so we are all one. He used to see His beauty, His force, His supremacy and His glory everywhere. He writes in one of his poems:

Thou art within us and outside as well
Thou art above us and below us and around
Thou art in every particle, always everywhere
Breath of our breath, heart of our hearts,
thought of our thoughts
Thou art wisdom and the throb of life thou
art the wealth of all wealth
Life thou art and sole existence
permeating all
Time and Space flow from Thee
All beings all things that move and do not
move are Thy forms
It is Thee within that aspires to grow
From Thee alone all blessed revelations flow.

It was his belief that the Divine is the sole moving force behind the universe and all creation. Hence the ultimate goal of all wisdom and knowledge lies in dedicating oneself to the supreme. That is the basis and the final achievement of Bhakti. Bhaiji had attained such a state of surrender effortlessly. His spiritual pursuits had commenced at a very young age. He practised austerities and penances and became totally absorbed in the worship of the Divine. It is my impression that he was a devotee of Shri Krishna and was all the time in a state of bliss. He discharged his wordly duties in that state of bliss. Bhaiji did not attach any importance to bodily pain. He demonstrated this indifference to pain during his illness right up to his death. On the one hand was the medical wisdom of the doctors attending on him, and on the other was his spiritual illumination. These two often clashed but ultimately it was spirituality that triumphed over physical wisdom. To Bhaiji the physical body was only a means; God was the sole end.

He carried on his worldly activities as a sacred duty but he considered each task or activity as belonging to the Divine and not to him. He used to view every good deed as worship of the Supreme Being. No sensual consideration ever hampered his worshipful attitude. Physical body was always an instrument to him that helped rather than hindered him in his worship, devotion and dedication. It was his conviction that prayer always brought good. Describing the power and the significance of prayer, he has written:

“God and destiny are indivisible. Hence whatever God ordains is for the best. Even then, if something appears to us as unfavourable we ought to stall it and at the same time offer silent prayers to Him. Prayer has immense and invincible force. If we offer prayers to Him in right earnest even seemingly impossible will be made possible for us. But God is omniscient and always gives us joy. Hence He answers only that prayer which is in our best interest. If some prayer is not answered, we should take it that that is in our interest. But prayer should rise from our innermost being, from a pure heart and mind and

with firm faith in the Divine. No particular words are imperative for prayer. God understands every dialect and speech. Prayer should be offered in the language of the heart."

Bhaiji expresses his heart-felt feelings to the Divine of following lines of his poem:

"Thou art the sole haven of fallen ones like me, O Lord!
Let my shelterless soul take refuge at Thy lotus feet
Give me strength that through my body I may ever
worship Thee.

And through my speech I may ever sing Thy glory.
Let all my senses be dedicated to service
Let any mind contemplate only Thee

The Cow, the Ganga, the Gita and Govinda

Bhaiji's achievements are so vast and mind-boggling that it seems difficult to believe that all that he did by way of worship of the Divine and service of living beings could have been done by a single individual in a single life time. Bhaiji was an embodiment of Vaishnava ideals. To be kind to all living beings is to worship God in the real sense. Bhaiji was a believer in non-violence. He was against all forms of cruelty, but he considered keeping cows as the most effective means of practising non-violence and symbolic of it. Cow's milk, urine and dung all have high medicinal value for man. Both physical sciences and spirituality in India have recognized the great importance of cattle-wealth. The cow is not only an animal but is recognized as a goddess in India. That is why she is called *Go-Mata*.

Bhaiji has written in one of his articles, "India is a country of saints and seers, a country given to spiritual pursuits. Cow-slaughter should not, therefore, be countenanced even in thought here. It is saddening indeed that India is free today and yet Indians have to tolerate cruel slaughter of thirty thousand and more cows daily and have to request the Government to ban this slaughter. Spirituality is at the root of Indian way of life and yet we have to launch movements and saintly people have

to court arrest and sacrifice their lives demanding ban on cow slaughter. It is a matter of great shame and misfortune. Mahatma Gandhi had expressed the view that he considered cow protection as something even more important than swaraj. Now in the country of the same Mahatma and under the rule of his followers cow-slaughter is going on unchecked and saintly people who resort to peaceful agitations and lay down their lives to ban it are being ill-treated. We could not have fallen down to lower levels than this situation. I have no connection with any political party. I pray to the Government to put a stop to the sin of cow-slaughter for ever, by suitably amending the constitution if necessary as early as possible. Everyone of us should try to put pressure on the Central Government so that it declares ban on cow-slaughter before the next Gopashtami."

In accordance with his ancestral Vaishnava tradition Bhaiji used to participate in every activity aimed at the good of the people but he felt most pained at cow-slaughter. After the attainment of independence by India, Bhaiji always supported directly and indirectly the movements and organisations working for a ban on cow-slaughter. But he lent his full support to the cause during the movement of 1966-67. He took over the entire financial responsibility of the movement on his shoulders and fulfilled it in the best possible manner. He was always in favour of carrying on peaceful agitation for a ban on cow-slaughter. He played a prominent part in the formation of the All Party Cow-Protection Movement Committee. He was residing at Rishikesh in 1966. The blue-print for this organisation was prepared at his residence there. Bhaiji brought the two veteran scholars and saints, Karpatriji and Prabhudutt Brahmachari, on one platform through this organisation. Bhaiji was not keeping good health in those days, but he was never absent from the meetings of this organisation. The ex-M.P. from Hamirpur (Rath) Swami Brahmanand opposed the Government in this matter and went to prison for the cause.

Bhaiji was in favour of carrying on the movement in a peaceful manner. He did not approve of hunger-strikes or any other pressure tactics. He was of the view that saints and Mahatmas should not put their life in jeopardy through hunger-strikes. But if someone took a vow to do so then he should not go back upon his resolve. Once the Puri Shankaracharya Swami Niranjandeo Tirth and Shri Prabhudutt Brahmachari decided to go on fast unto death, Bhaiji wrote: "None can die till he is destined to die and none can live when his hour comes. And it is a shining glory and a great spiritual attainment if a person lays down his life for the sake of the Divine or his religious ideals. That, in fact, is the true martyrdom. I have attachment for the lives of the revered Acharya (Shri Shankaracharya) and Shri Bramachari, and I consider their lives as extremely precious to the country and religion. So I earnestly desired that their lives may be saved. But once a vow has been taken the fulfilment of that vow is as important as the safety of their lives. Therefore, I wished that their lives might be saved through the Government acting for the preservation of the cow, as it has promised. At least it ought to be agreed in principle that law will be enacted for such preservation. It is a matter of sorrow that this has not been done."

Commenting on the fast of Shri Shankaracharya Shri S.K. Patil had said: "If Shri Shankaracharya dies it will be a stigma on Hinduism." Bhaiji commented on the above observation through his monthly magazine *Kalyan* that he was not in agreement with Shri Patil, and that Shri Shankaracharya has not died; his fast has ended and we do not agree with what Shri Patil says.

If Shri Shankaracharya had died, it would not have been a stigma on Hinduism but on the present Government because of which he would have laid down his life. If he had died, Hinduism would have attained a new prestige. Hinduism has immense capacity to inspire people for self-sacrifice for a cause. Such a sacrifice could never have been a blemish, it would have

shown the strength of spirituality. It would have made the life and the works of Shankaracharya inspiring and immortal.

Whenever Bhaiji heard of a person or organisation or publication connected with the effort to have cow-slaughter banned he would go out of his way to lend him or it his support. Vishwambhar Nath Sharma had written something against cow-slaughter. Bhaiji sent him a letter in appreciation. He strove to spread the message of Divine consciousness, Indian heritage and ceaseless service through *Kalyan* and *Kalyan Kalpataru*, the magazines he edited. In 1945 he brought out a special issue of *Kalyan* devoted to cow-protection. About 101300 copies of this special issue were printed. He gave extensive quotations from the Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Puranas etc. in support of his views on cow-protection. He himself wrote a book *Govadha Bharat Ka Kalank* (Cow-slaughter a stain on India). The book was widely appreciated all over the country. He established a Goshala Dairy in the Gita Vatika complex in Gorakhpur. The inmates of Gita Vatika are using milk, curd and ghee supplied by this Goshala. Tending cows, protecting them and endeavouring to stop their slaughter were important parts of Bhaiji's spiritual pursuits. He once wrote, "The question of preservation and development of cows is of great importance at this moment." It has been considered from different points of view. I hope our readers will also think over it. To further this aim the following steps are requisite: (1) Awakening people to a realization of the importance of the cow, (2) Making efforts to stop cow-slaughter, (3) Abstaining from use of hides of slaughtered cows, (4) Stopping the trade in the bones and hides of slaughtered cows, (5) Disseminating the knowledge of cow-keeping, (6) Ensuring that cows are not sold directly or indirectly to the slaughter houses, (7) Propagating the ill-effects of meat-eating and turning people's mind from this habit, (8) Developing good breeds of milch-cattle with the help of healthy bulls, (9) Pressing the administration and the people to set apart grazing grounds in different parts of the country, (10) Arranging for medical care of cattle, (11) Creating goodwill and amicable relations between

Hindus and Muslims. Getting articles on cow-protection written by Muslims, translated and printing and distributing them; getting articles written and published in Muslim papers and periodicals, (12) Cattle-pounds for protecting cattle, (13) Trying to get laws banning cow-slaughter enacted, (14) Trying for cow-protection under the present laws and regulations, (15) propagating the significance of cow-keeping through pamphlets, slides, Kirtans etc., (16) Carrying on regular agitations to ban cow-slaughter and writing to the Government about it, (17) Making efforts through the legislative bodies for cow-protection, (18) Making arrangements for procurement of sufficient cattle feed, (19) Making maximum use of cow dung and urine as fertilizer and (20) Increasing the sale value of cows through above efforts so that keeping a cow may become tempting and lucrative. There are various other such suggestions interspersed in the special number of *Kalyan* devoted to the cattle wealth, and they should be followed up.

The exhaustive list of suggestions given by Bhaiji shows how deeply involved he was in cow-protection and development of cattle wealth. These suggestions are not mere day-dreams. He had first-hand knowledge of cow-keeping.

Bhaiji wrote letters about cow protection to all who had faith in non-violence. He wrote to Vinobaji in these touching words:

“It is universally recognized that love for the cow is an inalienable element in Hindu life and spirit. If Bapu had been amongst us today, we would not have felt the need of any movement. He would have seen to it that cow-slaughter was banned. Now all hopes centre in you. I pray to you with folded hands to bring about a total ban on cow-slaughter in India.” Bhaiji’s heart wept for the cow. He had written to Jaya Prakash Narayan, the then socialist leader. He wrote: “I am sure you favour a total ban on cow-slaughter. Several prominent Sadhus and Mahatmas are ready to lay down their lives for this cause. It is my request to you to use your influence with the Central Government so that cow-slaughter is stopped through an

amendment to the constitution. I cannot explain the reason, but it is my firm belief that no good will come to India and to Indians so long as cow-slaughter continues to even the smallest extent." He also wrote letters to other leaders in the Government or outside it. Bhaiji was of the view that apart from the economic feasibility, the cow was an object of worship for us and it was our bounden duty to tend her and protect her as we protect our own mother.

Bhaiji had an intense longing to go away from Gorakhpur and reside in a place where the sacred waters of the Ganga would be within reach. Shri Chamanlal Goswami and Dr. Bhagwati Singh have written about this longing of Bhaiji. They say: "He was on several occasions moved by a strong desire to go and live on the banks of the Ganga in solitude, to wear ochre robes and to spend all his time in spiritual pursuits only. But Bhaiji remained in the field of activities till the end of his life out of his desire to serve his fellow men and spent a life of detached householder."

He came to have a distaste for the ephemeral possessions of this transient world and family attachments. He used to say that his thirst would not be quenched by anything less than God-realization. He wanted to live on the banks of the Ganga and enjoy the play of the Divine. Since the Lord did not permit him to renounce the world altogether, at least he might live in the proximity of the Ganga. As he went through religious classics like the Vedas and the Puranas in connection with his work for *Kalyan*, he came across innumerable reference to the Ganga and her sacred glory. These became deeply imprinted in his mind. Says a Sanskrit couplet:

"If one merely casts a glance at the Ganga, sins of a hundred lives are expiated, if one drinks its water, sins of two hundred lives are washed away, if one bathes in it, sins of a thousand lives disappear. Such is the greatness of the Ganga in Kaliyug."

Bhaiji also wrote a poem in praise of Ganga:

When shall the welcome day dawn
 When my deluded mind shall be free of all attachments
 And become happily absorbed in the remembrance of the
 Lord
 When shall it give up the falsehoods of this world
 When shall it see the reality behind the glitter and the
 temptations
 When shall it dwell aloof in solitude in the land of the
 Rishis
 When shall all my sins be washed away by the sacred
 waters of the Ganga
 When shall the darkness vanish in the glow of spiritual
 endeavours
 When shall all attachments fade away and the dream
 world disappear
 When shall I truly renounce and thereby own divine bliss
 immeasurable
 When shall the reflection become the reflected and the
 self vanish.
 And become merged for ever in the Infinite and the Eternal.

Bhaiji was drawn on the one hand towards the pellucid current of the Ganga and on the other towards the gurgling stream of the teaching in the *Gita*. Thinking that duty was above all and that while sojourn on the banks of the Ganga would only bring moksha to him as an individual, the work for the Gita Press would work for the deliverance of the millions, he chose the latter and remained at Gorakhpur all throughout the rest of his life. He had attained the ocean of spirituality and so he could easily forego his longing for the Ganga. When one has reached one's destination, why should one search for any path? The test of one's true faith lies in one's being happy in all situations. Bhaiji has beautifully expressed the above sentiment in the following composition:

One who is happy in all situations created for him by the
Lord
Has truly attained heights of spirituality and is truly blessed
one who dwells ever in the Divine with single-minded
concentration
And surrenders thoughts, his wisdom, his deeds to the Lord
Looks to nothing else for succour
And renounces the world of sense
Has truly attained success and is a pure and blessed soul

Bhaiji had surrendered his thoughts, his knowledge, his self and everything to the Divine. It was natural for him to think that his own choice was of no consequence. What mattered to him was the will of the Lord.

The *Gita*, the Gita Press and Hanuman Prasad Poddar had in fact become synonymous. The *Bhāgwad Gita*, which is a part of the Mahabharata composed by Maharshi Vyas, is available today not only in India but throughout the world in translations in a variety of languages. The *Gita* presents to man a solution to the problems of his life. It is a panacea for all his ills. It provides him succour in moments of distress. It dispels depression and tensions. It forms the basis of the true path of knowledge, works and devotion and is at the root of all spiritual faiths. Revolutionaries in India, in fact used to consider the *Gita* as a text-book for them.

As Bhaiji advanced in age, the *Gita* became the main prop of his religious life. The principles enunciated in the *Gita* became the guiding principles of his life. The *Gita* with a Hindi translation was published first in Calcutta. It was edited by the eminent Hindi journalist, Baburao Vishnu Paradkar. On its cover was a picture of Mother India holding a copy of the *Gita* in one hand and a sword in the other. Hundreds of copies of this edition were distributed among the revolutionaries. When no copies were left Bhaiji arranged to get a new illustrated edition printed by Sahitya Samvardhini Sabha of Calcutta.

Bhaiji's realization of the universal nature of the Divine was

a direct result of his studies of the *Gita*. He had truly imbibed its basic concepts. He had truly observed and experienced the transcendental powers of the Divine. He delivered lectures on different topics treated in the *Gita* at public meetings and seminars. He presented his views in depth on God through his lectures and writings in the magazine *Kalyan*. Often he used to answer the doubts raised by his readers but even when there were no questions to answer he used to pose questions himself and answer them for the satisfaction of his readers. An example of this is given here in Bhaiji's own words.

Two or three doubts are raised in this connection.

(1) How could God reveal his cosmic form to Arjuna confined within the narrow space of a chariot?

(2) If the cosmic form of the Divine is timeless, how could ephemeral forms like physical bodies dwell in it?

(3) The destiny of the creation is pre-determined and is known to the Divine. Why then are we told that we must do this or that and that such and results will flow from our actions.

The explanation of the above doubts is as follows:

(1) God is omnipresent. He can transcend space and time. His creation can pass through the eye of a needle, if He so wishes. Nothing is impossible for Him. So He could reveal His cosmic form even while confined within small space.

(2) This entire creation is a play of the Divine. All objects of play remain within the cosmic form of God. All things, mortal or immortal, are objects of His play and therefore part of Him. And thus what is changing and transient is subsumed in the timeless and changeless.

(3) Future for us is not pre-defined. We have to reap what we sow as far as our actions are concerned. But future does not exist as far as the Divine is concerned. All that exists anywhere belongs to, and exists in God. He can see through past, present and future. He is omniscient. All things definite or indefinite are known to Him. How does He know all this? Only He can answer."

The impact of such sermons was tremendous. While Bhaiji was in Bombay, Principal of the local Marwari College, Mr. N.M. Lakhani told him one day, "I shall feel obliged if you tell our boys about the *Gita* for an hour daily. They will greatly benefit by such lectures." Bhaiji accepted the proposal. He told the boys once, "If you can ponder over what I tell you here and translate it into action, I shall feel well rewarded for my efforts."

The entire lifestyle of Bhaiji, his thoughts and ideas, his conduct followed the guidance given by the *Gita*. He considered the teachings of the *Gita* as imperative for the exaltation and purification of life. He edited and published *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita Number* of *Kalyan* in the year 1929 so that all those who desired to be delivered of their pains and sorrows could enter the domain of the Divine bliss. Bhaiji established a committee for wider dissemination of the teachings of these sacred *Gita* and *Ramayana* Examination works. Bhaiji's faith in the *Gita* took firm and quick roots owing to the inspiration of Seth Jaya Dayal Goendka.

He began to devote his entire working time in the study of the *Gita*. He felt the need to have a printing press so that the ideas and sentiments expressed in the *Gita* may could be translated in popular languages and published for wider groups of readers. When one of his dearest friends and devotees Ghanshyamdas Jalan came to know of this he undertook the responsibility for its management. Ultimately it was decided to establish the press in Gorakhpur. It was also decided simultaneously that the press, which was named the Gita Press, would work under the auspices of Govind Bhawan of Calcutta, an institution of social service working under the guidance of Seth Jalan who also arranged for the buildings and printing machines etc. for it at Gorakhpur. A Brahmin was appointed to propagate the teachings of the *Gita* in villages for a small sum.

Bhaiji created a deep interest in the *Gita*, not only in India but also abroad through the periodical *Kalyan*, its special

numbers and a large number of books published by the Gita Press. As a result of this millions of copies of the *Gita* in translations were sold. The *Gita* harmonizes Indian philosophies of the different schools. The *Gita* tells us about the path of our deliverance. It resolves the problems of our external and inner life. Hence the *Gita* is held in the highest esteem in the world. And the credit for this world-wide popularity of the *Gita* goes to Bhaiji.

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was a deeply devoted householder saint. The veteran Hindi journalist, Pt. Shri Narayan Chaturvedi writes about him, "Shri Poddar was a capable public servant, a saintly and scholarly person, a poet and an eloquent speaker, a writer and an ideal householder. Every moment of his life and every cell of his body was all the time felt the rapture of the thrilling play of Radha-Madhava. Poddarji presents a living example of religion, devotion and knowledge all blended in one. Poddarji was a devotee of Govinda and His inseparable consort Radha. He considered this entire universe as a manifestation of Radha and Govinda. His abiding faith was reflected in chanting of *Shri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare*. The roots of this faith could be found in the *Gita* and the *Bhagwad*. He meditated on them and was immersed in their contemplation. He surrendered to them all his desires and volitions and was happy only with them every moment of his life. His happiness has been well expressed in the following poem composed by him:

Let me call Thee alone, O dearest one, and look only at Thee
Let me surrender this self fully to Thee and feel ever happy
and free,

Thou alone art all to me, the source of all my joys
Life of my life, breath of my breath, soul of my soul,
I know not good and bad, happiness and sorrow,
Let thou be all let thy will be done let me feel Thee alone,
Let me not forget Thee, for Thy remembrance is the wealth
I have in my life.

Let no other thought be in my mind, live thou ever in all
the spaces of my heart. Be thou ever my companion, God.
That is my sole prayer to Thee.

Bhaiji had turned fully inwards during the last phase of his life. His mind was constantly fixed on the Divine. He was satisfied that he had done whatever was to be done in this world and he had fulfilled all his obligations. He had realized the Ultimate. What need for him to think of worry about his mundane duties? Bhaiji generally did not reveal to anyone this state of Samadhi. But he kept nothing hidden from those who deserved to know of such things. He wrote to Pt. Gopinath Kaviraj about this state of identity with the Divine in the following words:

“I constantly have the feeling that the nectar of the Divine is ever being showered on me. I have not been keeping good health for some time now.” To Orissa Chief Minister Vishwanath Das he wrote: “I feel joy even in my present state of bodily illness. I often retire into silence and solitude and then I am in such a blissful state that no words can describe it. I find I cannot take interest in wordly matters. I withdraw into my room and don’t feel like meeting or talking to anyone. At the same time, I find myself in a strange state. It is all due to God’s grace. I cannot describe it. Suddenly all my bodily functions and mental faculties come to a stop. The world disappears. Only life-breath continues. The body becomes inert. Even when eyes are open, nothing is seen as there is no seer. You may call it the state of samadhi or anything else. Earlier, I used to aspire for such a state and made efforts to enter into it, now, even without any efforts and in spite of trying to forcibly occupy myself in wordly pursuits, I find myself in this state which lasts from a few minutes to 15 to 20 hours. Body, mind, thoughts—all of them come to a standstill. So I have to be very cautious all the while. In fact it is best in such a state to leave aside all mundane tasks. But I am duty bound to perform them.” Shri Govind Das Vaishnava writes about this transcendental state of Bhaiji: “During the last eight or ten

years of his life Bhaiji was often in the state of Bhava Samadhi. He used to call it a mental aberration to escape popular notice. Someone asked him if it did not amount to telling a lie? His reply was that since he was rendered useless from the worldly point of view what else could he call it but mental aberration?" Replying to certain arguments of Shri Vaishnava on spirituality Bhaiji said, "I too subscribe to the idea of non-duality. But I interpret non-duality in the sense that all is Shri Krishna. He has form and He is formless. His name, His form, His play, His abode—all are eternal. His divine body is eternal too. Within his divine abode are places, buildings, pools, gardens, flowers, animals, birds, sun and moon etc. But all of them are divine and not mundane. They are his varied manifestations. Maya or illusion and nescience have no place there. Whatever appears in this world is the shadow of that divine world. Some consider Shri Krishna as worshipper of Maya. Some say he too evolves like others. I do not subscribe to these contentions. I consider him as the supreme Brahman. Adi Shankaracharya has himself described him in his *Prabodh Sudhakar* as 'Truth and knowledge incarnate in Azure glow'."

Saintly Poddarji held that Govind, the master of Maya is the sole origin and cause and effect of all worlds. The entire creation, though illusion is in fact His Shadow. This is that. This is not that. Only That is, nothing else exists. These expressions of Bhaiji indicate how deep was his faith in Govind. Bhaiji's belief in God was beyond all logic, unflinching and firm. No philosophy, no argument, no scholarly expositions could deter him from his belief in God. Replying to reader's letter in *Kalyan* Bhaiji wrote: "We may not be able to see God with our physical eyes, but we should be fully assure that He is always with us. Believe it. He is ever with us. Once we have firm faith that He is with us we must leave it to Him when He will be visible to us. If He so wills, we will see Him. We have to resolve in our mind that He is mine and I belong to Him."

A devotee has beautifully described himself in the following words:

“I am neither Brahmin nor Kshatriya nor Vaishya nor Shudra. I am not celibate nor a householder, nor an ascetic, nor a mendicant. I am merely an humble servant of all those who are absorbed all the time in the worship of the lotus feet of Shri Krishna the Lord of the *Gopis*.”

Thus when I belong to Him and He is mine all contacts with the world are automatically snapped and I cease to entertain any hope from it. If someone still remains in touch with the world, it is because he sees it as the joyous playground of His sweet Master and not out of any attachment, hope or ambition. This attitude of Bhaiji makes his description of the state of Samadhi still more clear to us.

Bhaiji had imbibed in full the guidance provided in each shloka of the *Gita*. He believed that the solution of all the problems and difficulties lies in the teachings of the *Gita*. Hence whenever he was faced with some difficulties or painful situations individually or for others, he accepted it as the will of the Divine. A sister was experiencing some difficulty in her household affairs. She wrote to Bhaiji about it. Bhaiji replied to her, saying, “Kindly have goodwill for your husband and pray for his welfare, which you must have been doing already. Whatever misery he is causing to you should be tolerated as being done by the Divine for your good. Take it as your destiny. Do not consider yourself as a body or a name. You are a soul. You are related to God who is making you pure through this penance so that you may become fit to reside in His eternal abode. Consider these sufferings as the will of the Divine for your ultimate welfare. God is always with you as your nearest and dearest one. He will never do any harm to you. Consider your present plight as an operation that is performed by a surgeon for the good of the patient. Bhagwan sang in the *Gita*, that as soon as one has faith in His kindness, one becomes free from all disquiet. “I am the friend of all living beings. As soon as one knows me, one attains real peace.”

Bhaiji never had the sense of possession for any worldly thing including his body. His belief and nature was to think

that all belong to Him and is meant for Him. Replying to an acquaintance's queries Bhaiji wrote: "Whatever you possess does not belong to you and is not meant for your use. This should be thoroughly grasped. Whatever you have earned you have done so for Him. Wealth, person, praise, intellect, wisdom, senses—consider them all as belonging to the Divine and offer them all to Him with sincerity without the least tinge of egoism and with utmost humility." For Bhaiji devotion and the object of devotion had become one.

Bhaiji had concentrated the sense of worship of Radha and Madhava in the adoration of Radha alone. Madhava is the ultimate Divine; Radha is His manifested face. Both are indivisible and inseparable one. Govind is synonymous with Radha and Radha with Govind. It was at the instance of Bhaiji that daily satsang (meeting of saintly people and their discourses) was commenced at Gita Vatika and it is continuing even this day under the guidance and inspiration of Radha Baba who resides in the Vatika and who was a close collaborator in Sadhana of Bhaiji. Bhaiji held the view that God can be realized through meditation. He had once told the persons who had doubts this view, "Those who say that they cannot meditate in fact do not know how to meditate. Meditation implies that we should be identified totally with the subject of our meditation. Meditation is capable of giving form to the subject of our concentration, and one can progress in meditation through constant practice. Verily has the sage Patanjali said, "If something is practised with reverence for a prolonged period, it invariably leads to a happy result." At present I do not meditate on that statue of God Vishnu, yet the moment I recollect it; it appears before my mind's eye. It was Bhaiji's view that knowledge, meditation, *japa* (repetition of the Holy Name) Yoga, adoration, works—all can attain their ultimate fulfilment through Bhakti or devotion. One can realize all one's heart's desires through Bhakti. Bhaiji writes in the introduction to his book *Prem Darshan*, "Bhakti is the principal means to attain Divine love. In fact it is itself embodiment of that love." It was his intense

faith that led him to the realization of the visions of Rama, Lakshman, Sita, Vishnu and other forms of God. He used to be submerged so deeply in meditation and was so concentrated in these practices that it became quite natural for him to see the subjects of his adoration in the forms in which he wanted to have their vision. He had full faith in the power of prayer.

God always extends His protection to His devotees. The sole condition is that one should be a sincere devotee. Because Bhaiji was a sincere devotee, he bore the pain of separation quietly when his only son aged 18 or 19 died. He considered it the wish of his Lord and accepted the tragedy with grace. He considered it as the snapping of another link that had attached him to this mundane world. He wanted people to think and act for their real welfare and for deliverance. He did not desire welfare or deliverance for his own sake alone. Bhaiji wanted that God's Grace should descend first on these numberless people, who suffered from pain and illusions in this world. The well-known Hindi scholar Seth Govinddas has paid tributes to Bhaiji in the following beautiful words: "Shri Poddarji's life was dedicated not only to self deliverance but to the welfare of the entire humanity. Although he was endowed with all the attributes of a sanyasi, (one who has renounced the world) such an asceticism, strict observance of all the rules laid down for the order, compliance of all religious inhibitions, cultivation of all noble qualities etc., yet his aim was not individual welfare but welfare of the entire creation. In other words he was a Bhakta sanyasi that lighted the path of devotion for others."

The purpose of the above narration is to show that Bhaiji's entire being had become identified with Radha Govind. *Sant* poet Surdas has written in one of his lyrics:

"Mind is but one, O Uddhava,
And that we have despatched with our beloved Shyam .
Who will now worship your formless God?"

Like the Gopis who spoke thus to Uddhava, the messenger of Shri Krishna with his sermon to worship formless God instead of Shyam Sunder, there was no room in Bhaiji's mind and heart, too, for anything except the intense adoration of his Lord. This world had a value to the extent it was permeated with the Divinity. Hence Bhaiji did not shirk from it. He used to take up the task of relieving the sufferings of others and setting them on the path of self deliverance through prayer, devotional songs, Kirtan, Yajana and worship of the Divine, Satsang and Bhakti. Bhaiji can be counted among such Bhaktas who are rare indeed in number. He used to look at the world as originating in the Divine, existing in Him and acting through His inspiration. He has expressed this idea beautifully in one of his poems:

Thou art the life of my life, the only wealth I possess
 Thou art the ego, the illusion, the idea I entertain and the
 thought I think
 Thou art my sole object, my sole means
 My ultimate heaven my intensest joy
 Thou art the fortune of my fortune, my brightest name
 and fame
 Thou art my past and my present and my future
 Thou art all to me, my everlasting strength
 Thou shall remain ever with me and Thou shall be forever
 mine

The Spiritual Way of Life

Habits and character dictate and stimulate all the activities or absence of them in a man's life. Habits and character are not formed just in our present life but are the cumulative consequence of our deeds all along the cycle of our previous lives, our present life and of the lives yet to be. This principle must have been working behind Bhaiji's saintly nature, his spiritual way of life and his sense of service to all, his simplicity, humility, restraint, purity of thought and deed, true knowledge,

detachment and all the vaishnavite qualities which he personified. He won over all who came in contact with him through his spiritual way of life and made a deep impact on the future society as well. The instrument he wielded to bring about this transformation was satsang, kirtan, japa, religious ceremonies, sermons etc. Men of world as much as saintly souls, and even thieves and gamblers, were attracted towards the programmes arranged by Bhaiji. He aspired to transform human beings into godly souls. Nothing permanent was good or bad in this creation which was all His playground. Therefore, Bhaiji could never harbour any sense of hostility or hate against anyone. He was against the evil of untouchability, for none was high or low for him. He was not prepared even to accept the theory that these were gradations of the Divine force which, to Him, was omnipresent and omniscient. Replying to the queries of a reader of *Kaljan*, he laid down the various steps leading to a spiritual way of life:

1. Gods Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Durga are separate only for the sake of the universal play of the Divine. But they are one in essence. There is nothing at all to differentiate them. Therefore, it is a sin to consider them high or low and to reject one or the other on that basis. It is a sign of total ignorance. One ought to worship his chosen God with an appreciation of the fact that all these manifestations of the Divine are one and the same and are alter egos of one's own chosen God created for the Divine play.

2. Rama's name can be repeated under all circumstances. There is no harm if one repeats it loudly, but the *japa* that is done quietly with each breath or even deeper in one's consciousness is of special significance.

3. Food should be simple and nutritive in accordance with the requirements of bodily health and should be taken during fixed hours only. Nothing that is injurious to health should be taken and nothing that is beneficial for health should be forcibly rejected. Of course, one must entirely give up meat and eggs, intoxicant liquors and other things that are likely to

arouse impure desires and thoughts. God has ordained in the *Gita* that the food must be taken at intervals and only as suited to bodily health as only such food will remove all causes of our suffering. Nothing should be eaten just to satisfy the palate.

4. Untouchability that has its roots in hatred or the sense of high and low, is certainly condemnable. The Shashtras (sacred scriptures) do not speak of untouchability based on hatred. How can we hate any one when our scriptures tell us of the presence of one and the same God in all creatures? Therefore, the so-called untouchability of our Hindu scriptures is not based on hatred but on certain scientific principles.

5. Dhoti-Kurta, towel, blankets, bed-sheets, quilts etc. used by others should be avoided by a sadhak. One should also not eat in the same plate along with others, for we may catch the disease-carrying germs and may fall prey to new diseases. That will disturb our Sadhana.

6. One ought to pay obeisance daily to one's parents and other elders in the house. We should not feel ashamed of such an act, but feel glorified instead. Women should not touch the feet of anyone except their fathers, husbands etc. If we pay obeisance to a person he invariably has feelings of goodwill for us and if he was not well disposed towards us earlier he changes his ideas after such an act.

Shri Poddar laid stress on purity both outer and inner. According to him, purity of the body as well as mind is essential for a spiritual way of life. He organised a Sadhana Samiti for the devotees living with him. More than fifty persons became its members. The number would have been much more, but it was incumbent on its members to observe certain rules. These were:

- (1) To remember God's name on rising from bed in the morning.
- (2) To remember His name at least once even before morning ablutions.
- (3) To remember Him at least once during the ablution.

- (4) To perform sandhya at least once.
- (5) To count at least one round of rosary with Gayatri Mantra.
- (6) To recite at least one Chapter of the *Gita* with rendering of its meaning in one's own language.
- (7) To study the essentials of the *Gita*.
- (8) To contemplate the Divine while reading The *Gita*.
- (9) To meditate at least for five minutes.
- (10) To recite the verse *Kar Pranam Tere Charno Mein* (With obeisance to Thee) every morning and to do so with a comprehension of its meaning.
- (11) To do some physical exercise at least for five minutes.
- (12) To touch the feet of the elders (father, mother etc.) present in the house.
- (13) To study Shashtras or to sit with saintly souls and listen to their views for at least half an hour.
- (14) To count rosary at least five times with the Hare Rama, Hare Krishna Mantra.
- (15) To concentrate on the Holy Name while eating.
- (16) To offer food first to gods according to Balivaishwadeo rites.
- (17) To remember Him while going to sleep.
- (18) To give up wearing foreign clothes or silk which involves killing of silk worms.
- (19) To give up intoxicants such as bhang, tobacco, cigarettes etc.

Bhaiji observed the above rules in letter and spirit. In fact, his Sadhana had gone much further than mere observance of such rules. He considered control of mind as the basis of all spiritual practices and so he wrote a book on the subject. Once when Bhaiji was at Rishikesh certain satsangis asked him how to progress in Sadhana? Bhaiji enumerated five conditions for such a progress:

1. To have firm faith in God, holy scriptures and words of saints and seers.
2. To practice what one preaches till the last breath of one's life.
3. To feel the presence of the indescribable grace of God every moment of one's life.
4. Not to feel the least proud of one's spiritual practices.

Bhaiji was in favour of both individual Sadhana and collective Sadhana for spiritual fulfilment and transcendental attainments. Meditation and contemplation were essential for individual practices and *Kirtan*, *Japa*, *Yajna* (sacrificial rites) are required for collective Sadhana. Purity of the body and mind had to go along with all such practices.

Spiritual pursuits in India saw full flowering of the Bhakti tradition and methodology. Bhaiji had faith in every method of Bhakti. Knowledge, works and devotion all had blended in the spiritual pursuits of Bhaiji. He was aware of the Brahman as the sole reality. He held that knowledge, works and devotion merge and form a tri-junction, a Trivani, only when knowledge is translated into action and moves ahead with faith and devotion.

Welfare of others had the highest place in the spiritual pursuits of Bhaiji. He considered removal of suffering as the basis of all religious observances. He established various institutions to give a practical shape to such observances. These institutions were engaged in religious deeds all over the country. Once the Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri Vishwanath Das, who later became the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, talked to Bhaiji about establishing a Ved Bhawan at Jagannath Puri. Bhaiji told him, "Why establish such a Bhawan at Jagannath Puri only? Why not in all the four centres of religious awakening Badrinath, Jagannath, Rameshwaram and Dwarka too?" Thus Ved Bhawans were established at all the four places due to the efforts of Shri Das and Bhaiji. Certain religious-minded colleagues of Bhaiji established Shri Radha-Madhava Sewa Sansthan at Gita Vatika, Gorakhpur with his blessings. Its objective was social, spiritual

and cultural uplift through service and publication and dissemination of healthy literature. Bhaiji said at the inauguration of this institution: "The objectives of Shri Radha-Madhava Seva Sansthan are very noble and I consider them imperative for building up character for Sadhana and for a life of regularity and service of humanity. The rules and regulations of this institution have been prepared under my guidance." The institution served its purpose to a considerable extent.

Bhaiji had firm faith in the spiritual pursuits in accordance with the shashtras. He wanted to propagate belief in God and Sanatan Dharma (the eternal religion) and raise moral values to new heights. He wanted Indian culture to be preserved, cow-slaughter to end through the efforts of both society and government, religious books and cultural periodicals to be published and made available at cheap prices, men and women to have belief in God and simple, intelligible Bhakti to be made popular. For this singing of the Holy Name or Kirtan was considered by him as the most efficacious means. Acharya Yamuna Vallabha Shastri wrote thus in his reminiscences: "Bhaiji was Vaishya only by birth. He was Brahmin by conduct and Rajarshi by his enthusiastic pursuit of spirituality. He was in fact a master, an Acharya, so far as devotional and service aspects of Bhakti are concerned.... Through his efforts the story of Rama and Krishna reached every household in India. He will be ever remembered for this pious achievement." Pt. Veniram Sharma Gaur Vedacharya who was well acquainted with the spiritual path pursued by Bhaiji, has written: Poddarji was as much a devotee of God as he was of his parents, the cow, the saints, the vedas, gods and goddesses, brahmans and the country. He was a well-wisher of the entire humanity, a true servant of the people, beloved of everyone, a friend to one and all, a man of deeds and of firm resolution. He had all the attributes of a great personality, self-sacrifice, asceticism, helpfulness to all, sense of equality, tolerance, generosity, humility and faith in the Divine. He led a saintly and ascetic life but he never neglected his duties towards

his family. His inner and outer personality can be truly described in this couplet:

“Is there anyone who will not adore a personality that is always cheerful, is kind-hearted and soft-spoken and always acts for the good of everyone.”

Bhaiji had all these qualities in abundance and so was able to infuse new life and joy in those who were in distress, who were tired and disheartened and disappointed of life. Bhaiji was indeed a Mahatma who ushered in a new era. A whole volume will be required to enumerate and present a complete picture of his spiritual way of life. Only a brief introduction could be presented about of all that he was and all that he did. Bhaiji was a deeply religious and saintly person who was moved by considerations of reconstruction of society and uplift of the human beings rather than the development and reconstruction of his own self.

The life story of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar is story of a Vaishnava devotee. Every action that he performed, every observance that he undertook pointed to the fact that he was a man of unshakable faith and a true servant of God. Krishna in *Bhagvad Gita* narrated in detail to Arjuna the ways of knowledge and works but yet Arjuna's mind remained unsettled, he was not able to concentrate in any worship, meditation, japa etc. Then the Divine Teacher decided to tell his disciple the secret of controlling mind. He says in the 18th Chapter of the *Gita*:

“O Arjuna, you fix your thoughts in Me, be My devotee, worship only Me, do obeisance to only Me; thus you shall be able to attain Me. Leave aside all other duties and surrender to Me only. I promise to you who are my dear disciple that then I shall make you free of all your sins.”

It appeared as if Bhaiji alongwith Arjuna had listened to this teaching of Shri Krishna and had given a practical shape to it in his life. Undoubtedly he had surrendered his body and mind to the Divine and it was a total surrender. To him God was everywhere. Bhaiji did study and practise Hath Yoga (physical side of yoga) for some time but he could not find peace of mind

through that method of forcible control of the senses. He wanted to get drunk on the divine nectar of Bhakti. Bhaiji did like the eight-fold path of Patanjali Yoga, but he did not like so much the method of suppression of senses and mind. Of the eight-fold path of Patanjali Yoga he did have faith in the first four edicts, i.e., Yama, Niyam, Asan and Pranayam (Observance of ascetic rules, physical exercises and breath control exercises) but he was more inclined towards the latter four, i.e., Pratyahar, Dharana, Dhyan and Samadhi (control of mind, concentration, meditation and entering into a state of blissful trance) as these appeared to him much more natural.

The sage Narad has delineated Bhakti or the path of devotion. He states that one who attains Bhakti becomes realized a soul, such a person feels satiated as if drunk of nectar. The seventh verse in Narad Bhakti Sutra (Aphorisms or Bhakti) states, this Bhakti is synonymous of Love and is entirely free of all mundane desires. Not to speak of wealth, family, fame or heavenly happiness such a Bhakti does not desire even deliverance. Nothing but the Divine finds a place in the heart of a Bhakta.

Bhaiji was such a devotee for him, the ultimate to be realized was none else than the Lord who is the embodiment of love. He has described this feeling most effectively in the following poem :

Shri Krishna is dearest to my heart
 He is embodiment of pure love.
 Love He professes and Love He receives
 Whatever He says and hears and smells is nothing but Love
 Love is what He looks at and touches
 Whatever Sri Krishna does is Love eternal
 He is a servant of love and master of love Divine
 Love that eliminates all distances all dividing walls
 Love that dissolves all illusions and carries us to our Lord.

Love eliminates all distances between the devotee and Lord Krishna. The Bhakta forgets all worldly attractions and becomes.

solely dependent on the Lord. Ultimately the two become one, Bhakta and Bhagwan merge in each other. Bhaiji's devotion was circumscribed by all the purest laws of religion and devotion. He has no other desires left except for the Lord, no other object to be realized except Shri Krishna. This feeling found its outward expression in love for all living beings and kindness, goodwill and friendship for all. In the Mahopanishad, Ribhu, father of Nidagh Muni, says while giving advice to his son, "The realized souls do not get disturbed when in distress. They do not hanker after anything else except what providence has bestowed to them and follow the path shown by the Shastras. They are naturally friendly, kind-hearted, ever happy and maintain equipoise under all circumstances. They are ever saintly in all their dealings." Bhaiji was always established in such saintly nature. He has attained this nature through his deeply devotional practices. There is a verse in the fifth chapter of *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* :

"That Brahma is not dependent on anyone or anything and is without a body. He is the creator and He is the destroyer. All the 16 Arts are born of Him. When a Bhakta, through his devotion attains Him, he gives up this mundane body for ever and becomes a delivered soul."

It is our belief that Bhaiji must have attained the above states through his deep and intense devotion of the Lord.

Self or ego has to be surrendered in toto to the Lord in the path of devotion. One has to merge one's insignificant identity to the all pervading existence of the Divine. Bhakti consists of the adoration, contemplation, meditation and *japa* of the Lord, and self-surrender is the first step towards this Sadhana. Total abnegation of the self has to be realized in this path. To offer *pranams* to all as the manifestation of the Lord and to see Him reflected in everyone is an essential quality of Bhakti. Bhaiji was a Bhakta to his inner-most love. He used to quote the following verse of *Shrimad Bhagwad* 11.2.41 very often.

Ether, air, water, earth, stars, all creatures, all directions, trees, rivers, seas and every other things that is created is the

body of Hari. Bow down, therefore, to all. All that exists has to be revered as the Lord Himself.

Bhaiji was a true devotee and did all that was required of a true Bhakta. The unity of thought and deed that was found in Bhaiji is rare even in great saints. Bhaiji was a votary of Bhakti of love. To him, Bhakti was not a means but an end in itself. It has been pronounced in Narad's Bhakti Sutra (aphorism on Bhakti) that Bhakti is a fruit. As such, it is an end product of our varied endeavours and not a means. The Bhakti that has heaven or deliverance as its objective is merely a subsidiary Bhakti. Bhakti of love is verily a result of innumerable, constant and prolonged endeavours. Such a Bhakta considers Moksha or deliverance or attainment of miraculous powers as of no importance at all. Bhaiji considered Bhakti both as a means and as an end. He was a firm believer in detachment from all mundane objects and desires. Lord Krishna says in *Shrimad Bhagwad*:

“My Bhaktas do not accept the five forms of deliverance, namely attainment of My abode, My nearness, identification with Me and My form and complete merger with Me, even if these are offered to them. What they accept is to serve Me in every respect.”

All the means such as pilgrimage, asceticism, Yoga, attainment of knowledge, skill, action, religion, charity, fasting, observance of rules and regulations, *japa*, sacrificial rituals, kindness towards all, serving the Guru or preceptor, faith, humility, discrimination have such a Bhakti as their objective. Says Tulsidas in his *Rama Charit Manas* “Whatever means have been prescribed in the Vedas are all for the attainment of Hari's Bhakti.”

The gamut of Shri Poddarji's Bhakti was so vast and so all-embracing that no religion or creed was excluded from it. Every facet of Bhakti of love described in *Narad Bhakti Sutras*, *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*, *Ramayana* of Valmiki, *Rama Charit Manas* of Tulsidas or *Yoga Vashishtha* had become inseparable part of Bhaiji's Bhakti. His Bhakti was a beautiful blend of *Bhajan* (remembrance of the Divine), *Shrawan* (listening to isH

doing), *Gun Kathan* (narration of His Divine qualities), *Archan* (worship), *Vandan* (offering prayers), *Darshan* (having visions), and *Manan* (contemplation). The other side of his Bhakti consisted of his humanism which reconciled all faiths within it wheather of the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians, the Sikhs, the Jains, the Buddhists. Muslim brethren also considered Bhaiji a saint. In the book *Pawan Smaran* (sacred Reminiscences) Mr. Riaz Ahmed Ansari and Sister B. Begum says that Bhaiji's ideas of social service were part and parcel of his Bhakti and he did not distinguish between a Hindu, Muslim or a Christian for social service. His charity spread its wings over all humanity. His love embraced the entire creation. His generosity, goodness, kind-heartedness and courtesy were not confined to his family only but found their true fulfilment in the vast fields of the entire family of man. The main prop of his Bhakti were Radha-Krishna. Rather it may be said that even Krishna had merged in the unfathomable ocean of love and emotion that Radha represented. That which had manifested Himself had merged within His manifested force and form. All the pious deeds of Bhaiji had their origin in his adoration of Radha and all the forms of his worship such as singing praises, contemplation, remembrance, narration of the Divine deeds etc. were directed towards Her. Whether he was eating or asleep or talking to others, all his activities flowed from his Bhakti of Radha-Krishna. His entire life had become identified with the object of his worship. He had lost all sense of physical body. He wanted to preserve bodily health only so that the body could be a fit instrument to serve the Divine. A diseased body is an obstacle in the way of the concentration of mind. When the mind is not quiet, the senses are at large, running after various worldly temptations. Bodily health results in the purity of mind and consciousness.

Bhaiji's method of concentration of mind had a blend of both Hathyoga (exercises for the control of body) and Raj Yoga (practices for the control of mind). Control of mind in fact depends on Yogic practices, but a totally dedicated Bhakta like

Bhaiji does not require the help of either Hathyoga or Rajyoga for such a control. For him, love of Radha-Krishna was quite sufficient. It was observed in case of Bhaiji that during the last days of his life, he was so deeply absorbed in Radha-Krishna and detached from everything else, that he could not be persuaded to think of his friends and family in spite of the efforts of many of his affectionate friends. Bhaiji himself at times tried to turn his attention to wordly duties, but his Bhakti was so intense that he did not succeed in his efforts. His mind was at that period of his life entirely detached from worldly considerations. It was a state in which instead of Radha-Madhava belonging to Bhaiji, Bhaiji totally belonged to Radha-Madhava. The Bhakta had become Bhagwan and Bhagwan had merged in the Bhakta. It was a total and complete identification in every respect. Heaven and Moksha (deliverance) waited eagerly for him in vain. These were far, far away from his aspirations. And whatever he aspired for, he attained. The duality between Bhakta and Bhagwan disappeared. One plus one had earlier equalled two; now there was only oneness, only unity. It is a strange occult Arithmetic and its indescribable joy has a taste of its own.

IV

Literary Works

BHAIJI'S POETIC genius was as remarkable as his other varied achievements. He was inspired mainly by the writings of Surdas, Goswami Tulsidas and the poets of Ashtachhap to compose poems in praise of the Divine. Influence of the styles of all the above mentioned poets can be seen in the poetical writings of Bhaiji. He composed songs, *dohas* (couplets) and devotional poems using various *ragas* and *talas* of music. They are extremely attractive and beautiful compositions. The volume of his creative writings is considerable, despite the fact that he was mostly absorbed in his spiritual pursuits. Alongwith the original writings, Bhaiji also wrote commentaries on well-known texts on spiritual subjects. These commentaries present a lucid explanation and analysis of the subject dealt with. *Pawan Smaran* gives a summary of Bhaiji's literary achievements in the following words:

"The late Bhaiji Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar, has given us creative writings running upto about twenty five thousand pages. About nine thousand pages have already come into print in book form. The rest is interspersed in the pages of the various issues of *Kalyan*, or is with his friends and acquaintances in the form of letters or has been included in other books published from the Gita Press. Work on publishing all this scattered material in the form of separate books is in progress. This material includes essays, letters answering queries from aspirants and life stories of saints and devotees. He also composed over two thousand poems in Braj Bhasha, Khari

Boli and Rajasthani. These poems have great depth of feeling. They are an invaluable treasure of Hindi literature. He also wrote commentaries on *Rama Charit Manas*, *Vinaya Patrika* and other well-known religious texts. These have been warmly received by discriminating readers."

We can look at Bhaiji's writings from two different aspects: their theme and content and their literary quality. It is not possible here to treat these except very cursorily here. If we shall attempt a full critique of this literature, we cannot perhaps achieve that object we have in view, and will have to deviate from the mainstream of our narration. Bhaiji's mind was always concentrated in Radha-Govind and delineation of the varied facets of the objects of his adoration. Worldly objects and desires had no attraction for him. It was, therefore, not possible for Bhaiji to compose poems depicting ordinary human emotions and sentiments. The poet in him was always singing about Bhagwan Krishan and His consort Radha. How could he, then, find any satisfaction whatsoever in singing praises of any ordinary human being?

Bhaiji's poetic writings can be divided into the following heads from the thematic point of view :

- (1) Prayers and panegyrics
- (2) Beauty and grace of Radha-Madhava
- (3) The play of Radha-Madhava and the sweet waves of the ocean of love.
- (4) Love originating in Bhakti and exposition of Gopis' love.
- (5) The birth of Radha-Madhava-Krishna Janma Celebrations-Japa and musical offerings.
- (6) Singing praises of Rama.
- (7) Description of the attributes of the various forms of God.
- (8) Nature of the Divine.
- (9) Various episodes of *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita*.
- (10) The glory of the Holy Name.

- (11) Call to awaken consciousness.
- (12) Aspiration.
- (13) Realization.
- (14) Temporal and Spiritual life.
- (15) Praises of Great Men, their character and qualities.
- (16) Miscellaneous.

These may be further grouped together under the following four heads :

- (1) Prayers and Panegyrics
- (2) Description of the beauties of Radha and Krishna
- (3) Bhakti and consecrations
- (4) Teachings and Cautions.

Bhaiji was emotional by nature. He had manifested this trait since his childhood. Poetry is delineation in an organised and attractive manner of one's emotions and sentiments. Poetry can be defined emotive description of a certain situation or circumstance. The effectiveness of such a description lies in its rhythmic quality. Rhythmic utterance has been held by scholars to be poetry. Since Bhaiji was emotional by nature, he had natural inclination towards poetic studies. Such studies gradually inspired him to tread the path of creativeness. Bhaiji was brought up in an atmosphere of spirituality. Therefore, his ideas also developed along those lines. Bhaiji's heart was surrendered to the worship of the Divinity. Naturally his poetic personality was also dedicated to the Lord and to the various aspects of the Divine—His abode, His forms, His play, His name came naturally to him as themes for his poetic endeavour. The introduction to the large collection of his verses, *Pada Ratnakar* says: "The first collection of the early poetic writings of revered Bhai Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was published in Samwat 1880 Vikramiya (1923 A.D.) under the title *Panch Pushpa* (The Five Flowers) at the instance of the well-known musician and devotee of Rama, Shri Vishnu Digambar Maharaj. These verses

were very much liked by Shri Vishnu Digambarji and he had set them to music in Samwat 1883 (1926 A.D.). When *Kalyan*, commenced publication, prayers, panegyrics and *Aratis* written by Bhaiji, began appearing in the magazine. Then there came out a number of collections of such poems from Gita Press, Gorakhpur. Some of these collections were: *Bhajan Sangrah (Patra Pushpa)*, *Shri Radha Madhava Ras Sudha (Sixteen songs)*, *Braj Ras Madhuri Madhur* (in two volumes), *Prarthana Peeyush*, *Braj Ras Ki Laharen*, *Hari Prerit Hridaya Ki Vani*, *Shiva Chaleesa*, etc. Since Bhaiji was averse to name and fame, he did not agree that his name be given as the author of the collections.

Bhaiji wrote in Khari Boli, Braj Bhasha, Rajasthani and other dialects and languages. He had good knowledge of Hindi, Sanskrit, Bengali and English languages. But he did not like Urdu since childhood and could not pick it up in later years. He was very careful to maintain purity and accuracy of language and prosody and emotive qualities. He never used a crude word. He was well acquainted with the subtle meanings and significance of the words and expressions in Braj, Khari Boli and Rajasthani dialects. In the introduction to his collection entitled *pada*, Bhaiji had made it clear as to what is the purpose and theme of his poetic writings. He was not well for some time in the year 1950. He composed devotional songs or *padas* during his illness. He writes in the preface, "God is an ocean of grace and always seeks to do good to us. He was kind to send to me this illness that did me so much good. I remained bed-ridden during this period. Doctors advised me to remain in solitude and take complete rest. I must not meet anyone during this period and must not take up any task. So, no one was coming to see me. There was no other work to do. Thus I got an opportunity to retire into silence and solitude. Except when I was being administered drugs or being served food, I remained confined to my room all alone. Thus, I used to think of things other than my disease. These other things were mainly self-introspection and self-analysis. All sorts of visions would

visit me during these moments. People consider me a great saint and Mahatma. But, what a great deception it is? What innumerable weaknesses there are within me? What impurities? What shortcomings? I used to sigh helplessly at all these visitations and felt so small within myself. Tears would roll down my eyes and my entire being would prostrate itself at the feet of my Lord who was ever so kind, so full of grace. He had accepted even a person like me as his servant. I would tell him repeatedly how very fallen, how small and helpless I was. At times, I would try to raise my drooping spirit through words of self-consolation.

During such periods, my Lord Shyam Sunder would appear to me with His charming and captivating smile and indescribable bliss. He would shower his grace upon me and tell me, 'O you simpleton! Why do you cry? Why are you feeling so depressed? So small? Come on. Let us go together to Braj. There you shall watch me engaged in My eternal play and be drowned in oceans of delight'. Listening to these honeyed words, I would forget all my depression and my entire inner being would follow Him. And leaving me in bliss, He would turn to His Divine play.

The mind wandered freely during such moments and envisioned him as a Child in the courtyard to Nand Baba, sometimes with Ma Yashoda, sometimes among the cows in the cow-shed, sometimes laughing and joking with His friends and companions. He would appear coming from the forest or roaming on the bank of the Yamuna, or engaged in singing and dancing with the *Gopis* in the divine Ras Lila or sitting and chatting them or visiting one of them in her home when she would be all alone, or appearing in the vision of one of them, or talking to someone in endearing terms. Shyam Sunder was sometimes standing under *Vanshi-Vat*, or swinging in a Shravani swing, or making appearance in white-flowers, or playing Holi with varied colours, or smiling within newly opened buds. My thoughts went sometimes to Vrindavana, sometimes to his Divine consort, sometimes to Shyam Sunder himself, at other moments to the solitary

shrubs where Kishore and Kishori were engaged in their eternal play of Divine Love. Sometimes among the scenes of Uddhava arguing with the *Gopis* to give up remembrance of Krishna and worship formless God, sometimes among Krishna and Uddhava engaged in conversation at Mathura, and sometimes among the *Gopis* lamenting the departure of Krishna to Mathura. These visions continued day and night for months together. I saw within me innumerable and strange Lilas and had unique and superb visions of Radha and Krishna and grasped the true meaning of it all and was even fortunate at times, I was entirely lost in these visions of magnificent beauty and grace. Whatever I saw there was Divine and transcendental which no words could describe nor thoughts enclose. It is not possible to describe it all in full. No words would suffice for it. But whatever was possible and could be captured in words has been partially presented here, as also my emotions when I was feeling helpless and dejected.

As we can see from the above preface, Bhaiji was always shy of acknowledging his qualities and his genius. There is a long tradition of Mahatamas trying to deny their genius and these spiritual achievements. Poet Tulsidas openly says, "I have none of the qualities of a poet. This truth I announce in writing on a blank sheet of paper," and further: "I have no claims to poetic genius or poetic art. I am merely attempting to sing the praises of my Lord Rama according to my lights." Thus Tulsidas, who was a perfect poet does not lay any claim to poetic craft. Bhaiji also follows the above tradition of saint-poets and does not accept the fact of his genius. Bhaiji adopted different rhyme schemes for different themes. It will be befitting that for the enjoyment of readers, we give below, from his voluminous collection *Pada Ratnakar* a song or lyric each, representing each theme. These specimens will also show Bhaiji's command over expression and prosody.

*Prayers and Panegyrics**Dohas*

Both are chakors and both are moons
 Both are black-bees and both lotuses
 Both are chatakas both are clouds
 Both are fishes and both are waters

Shelter they are as well as sheltered
 Subject they are as well as object

Both are actors in Their Cosmic Play
 And both enjoy the same
 Both bestow on each other thrills Divine
 And both are thrilled by Their Divine game.

And in Them all life's contraries
 And all opposing movements meet
 Beyond the ken of words They are
 So richly handsome, so grand indeed.

On lotus feet of Radha-Madhava
 I fall prostrate again and again
 Who are essentially ever one
 Though to us all manifest as twain
 To give us ever eternal joy
 For rapture is Their natural strain

O Radha! have mercy on this slave this moment
 Grant him love of the dust of the lotus feet
 of Thy Divine consort
 Banish all hopes in Him based on baser things
 and deadly desires
 Deliver him from temptations for indulgence or for
 freedom from death and birth
 Bless him with the strength to serve the servants of
 your servant's servants

And keep him ever in Thy bower that he may daily
sweep it clean for Thee.

Bhaiji also wrote hymns in his mothertongue—Marwari.
Here is an example of the same :

O Lord, this slave is prostrate at Thy feet
Deliver him from the clutches of this chaotic world
From the cruel cycle of death and birth
I have suffered enough, O my Master,
Having been born and re-born in eighty-four lakh lives
I have been blessed at last with the human birth
Now, at least, let my sufferings end
I know, Lord, I am a hardened sinner
I pinned hopes in mundane pleasures
 but got only pains for my efforts
Killer desires have had me in their clutches
I did not choose the golden path of Devotion
I ill-spent all my life running
 after ephemeral joys
And got nothing but pangs of pain in return
All hopes have now been dashed to the ground
And I have finally realised
That the worship of Thy lotus feet is
 the panacea of all my ills
Now at last the thirst for Thine
Celestial vision is growing ever strnger in me.

Behold the playful boy
Butter in hand
Sweet and simple and coy
Dancing with his companions and friends
To give universal joy
With comely cloth around Him as waist-band
And fabulous flute in hand
Behold the shining curls of hair

Black as black-bees
 And peacock-feather as headgear
 And *Kathula*¹ around the neck and lion's claw
 An arm-band
 And a garland
 And bewitching looks.
*Kundals*² in ears and *Tilak* on the forehead
 Add to the ecstatic charm of the Lordly lad
 To thrill every throbbing heart
 As of the *chakor*³ does the moon's shining light

 Hail to Thee, O son of the Lord of Braj,
 Wanderer of forests
 Stick in hand
 Peacock-feather as headgear
 The flute kissing the lovely lips
 Hail to Thee—
 Moving along the Jamuna banks
 With sky blue body
 And garment of yellow cloth
 With cowherd-boys and *Gopis* as companions
 Shedding smile all around
 Winning even the hard ascetic hearts.
 Hail to Thee—
 Wearing garland of *Gunja*⁴
 Black-bees buzzing around lotus limbs
 Moving in the bowers of Braj
 To charm Radha's soul
 Dancing in fun and frolic
 Ringlets of jet black hair waving in the wind
 Vanquishing even the all conqueror cupid
 And showering eternal bliss on *Gopis*

-
1. A bead necklace
 2. Ear-rings for males
 3. A mythical bird that is supposed to feed on moonlight
 4. A white and reddish wild-plant product

The Cosmic play of Radha-Madhava

Behold the child Govind
Lying in the lap of mother Brajeshwari
With naive looks
Sucking toe of His lotus foot with His lotus lips
Behold Mukund
Sweet child
With curly hair
And peacock-feather as headgear
And arm-band
And lion's claw
And waist-band of tiny bells
And trinket in the feet that sweetly sings
Behold the mother
Doting on the Divine Babe
And smiling with warm content
Her happy arms lifting the child
Her heart filled with bliss

In Vrindavan
On the banks of the Jamuna
Where trees tremble in trance and creepers crawl
with curiosity
Moves the Divine child
The flute tucked to the waist-band
Calves and cows, *Gopas* and *Gopis*
Enraptured with His enchanting charm
Behold, behold the child Divine
with ornaments exquisite and sweet
And garland and the lion's claw
Around the handsome neck
And peacock's feather as headgear
Behold, in *Vrindavan*.

The Sweet waves of Love's Ocean

Leaving everything else aside
 My heart is fixed to thee
 I am a slave of thy love
 The captivating notes of thy flute divine
 Sweetened with thine lip's honeyed wine
 Have made a prisoner of me.
 Having tasted this bliss, this joy
 Who will turn ever again
 To trinkets of this ephemeral world
 To pride false and grief and pain
 And hollow ambitions of ego
 And mortal gains
 Even deliverance from the cycle of death and birth
 Through which we go
 The sole desire that now remains
 Is how and when shall I behold
 My Mohan, charmer of my heart
 Possessor of my body and soul.

and

Listen, O sister soul,
 This is the voice of experience, of realisation
 Day and night I am one with my beloved, my Shyam
 My heart and my senses are ever filled now
 through constant touch of my Lord
 Gone are all griefs, all evanescent pleasures,
 all ambiguities born of this world
 gone is all awareness of my separate existence
 just the charm of my heart lives
 Where is 'I' now and where is 'you'?
 Where is the pride of separate existence of my 'self'?

Never, O never, shall I entertain now the sense of
 separateness from you
 Who is to bestow Bliss to whom, when the
 two are one for ever and ever more?

Confessions of Shri Krishna About His Love

Without Radha I am incomplete, just Krishna
 With Radha I am fulfilled, I blossom I become full-
 fledged Shri Krishna
 Without Radha I am inactive, static, powerless
 With Radha I am dynamic, I am active, I am entire force.
 Radha is the soul of my soul, life of my life
 the very basis of my existence
 The love I bestow to my devotees is the
 love Radha that I gain
 I am Radha, Radha is me, Radha and Madhava
 are one and the same.

Expression of Radha's Love for Shri Krishna

My one constant concern is:
 What should I offer to you?
 What riches may I give when all the wealth I have is you?
 You are the sole object of my love
 And every moment of my existence I belong to you
 Oh, what to dedicate since anything I wish to surrender
 already belongs to you?
 How to express in words, my Lord, what I feel for you
 since you may be many in sacred lores
 But are one and only one to me?
 You are the ultimate achievement of all my endeavours
 The master of my existence
 And all the prosperity I may wish to have

All bonds of body or possessions are gone
 All temporal or transcendental shackles gone
 Oh, what a blessed soul I am, my Lord,
 To have loved and lost myself wholly in you

and

All goodness resides for ever in the heart of Radha
 That it may per-chance be blessed to serve dear Shyam
 The stream of pure emotions that tempts all
 Has itself become one that is tempted
 And flows all the time in the heart of Radha
 Like ocean waves ever freshly sweet
 And feels fulfilled on Shyam responding
 With intensities doubly deep and pure

The Song Celebrating Birthday of Shri Krishna

The incarnation of Hari has appeared inside the prison
 All is purity now, all is blessed joy
 Trees and shrubs have blossomed and are laden with fruits
 Winds, coming from sandal woods, are serene, scented and
 slow
 Gods above are all cheerful, showering flowers and
 hailing the birth
 Brahma, the creator, Narad, the wandering celestial saint
 And all realised souls pray and praise in various ways
 Kinners sing and Gandharvas dance with you
 To have the vision of Him
 With conch and *Chakra* and mace and lotus in his
 four handsome hands
 And with the print of saint Bhrigu's foot and gem
 Kaustubh on his chest
 Such is his intensely glittering form

Hail to Thee, O Hari, with body of azure blue
And garland of purest pearls
And yellow cloth for body-cover
And bright, black, curly hair
Whom parents behold with wonder
And whose beauty puts to shame
the beauties of crores of cupids.

In Praise of Shri Rama

So merciful is Rama to helpless innocents
That he places them higher than even himself
And takes all care that no harm comes to them
When Ravan, the demon-king,
angry with Vibhishan for his defiance
attacked him with a weapon of charmed power
The whole world was overawed
But Rama, always protector of his proteges,
came forward unshaken
And sheltered Vibhishan behind Him
And bore the powerful weapon upon Himself
Even after you have known of such a kind
nature of your Lord
Are you not ashamed of yourself, O my heart
That you do not become absorbed in his worship
Who is as a ship in the stormy ocean,
Discarding immediately all earthly bonds and
pre-occupations?

In Praise of the Various forms of the Supreme Being

That supreme being is all knowledge and truth and bliss
He is the ultimate reality
He is the basis of all creation

He is beyond it all and yet pervades it
 The whole world is His manifestation
 Vishnu, Shiva, Sun, Durga, Ganesh—all
 are his benevolent forms
 Whom devotees worship according to their
 faith and inclinations.

The nature of the Divine

Hari is our incomparable well-wisher
 He is a veritable heaven of the humble and the fallen
 And counts not the faults and falterings
 of those surrendered to him
 He lends his helping hand to assuage all our pains
 And drives all fears from us through his benevolence
 And in the end sends us to His abode
 out of his utter kindness and grace.

Various Episodes of the Gita

In the field of Kurukshetra, the field of *dharma*
 Gathered together, eager for battle,
 What did they do, O Sanjaya,
 My sons and the Pandavas?
 The prince Duryodhana
 Having seen the army of the Pandavas arrayed in battle-
 order
 Approached his teacher Drona and spoke thus:
 Behold, Sir, the mighty army of the sons of Pandu
 For battle arrayed by your disciple, Dhrashtadyumna.

The Glory of the Holy Name

We hail, from the core of our heart,
The Holy name
That banishes all attachments
And mitigates all pain
That is the heaven of all the rishis
 thinkers, ascetics, yogis and realized souls
That is the lover of the Bhaktas
And the travellers of the path of love
That destroys all sins and all sorrows
That is the path of paths, the bestower of
 supernatural powers and all that is good
That, by its mere touch, annihilates all misdeeds
 as fire burns cotton buds.
That is father to us and mother, mate and brother
Preserver and teacher
That assumes the form we wish it to assume
That is the sole strength of the devotee who wishes
 to lead a religious life, perform his wordly duties,
 fulfil his higher aspirations and attain
 deliverance from the cycle of death and birth
That, finally gives him the supreme fifth gift of
 lover perfect and purest thrill.

Words of Caution

O my wandering mind
 give up thine ignorance
And drink deep the nectar of the lotus feet of thy Lord
Why do you indulge in worldly pursuits thinking
 you will get joy out of it?
They are all ephemeral, incomplete, sources of
 great aches and pains and grief.

Get out of the illusion that there is sweetness in
 wealth and in name and fame
 All of them are poisoned sweets
 That sap knowledge and truth
 False are the temptations of worldly things
 Truth lies only in the contemplation
 of the benevolent Divine every moment of our existence.

Aspiration

I have but one aspiration :
 To have the vision of the playful Shyam all the time
 on the banks of Jamuna beneath *Vanshivat*
 To lose myself completely in the lovely tunes of
 his divine flute
 To dedicate my body, my mind, my soul, my all
 to the glimpse of his form divine
 To please him, to sing his praises, to offer him
Gunja garland
 To forget the entire world and remember only to
 call out : 'Shyam, O my Shyam'.

Realization

Thou art the treasure of all my happiness
 Thou liveth all the time in my heart as
 my very life-breath, O Ghanshyam
 Thou art ever new, ever handsome,
 Ever tempting, ever the ocean of bliss
 Thou art ever engaged in Thy cosmic play
 Nothing else remains in my heart of this world
 or of others
 Gone are all ambiguities of this earth
 Gone are fear and grief
 I am now identified with Thy ever effulgent form

And the highest bliss and deepest peace are now
mine forever.

and

Broken are all the bonds of attachment with the world
Gone are fear and grief and all their allies
Since I am now identified with Thee.

Worship in Practice

Consider the entire world as reflection of Hari
Without Him creation exists not
It is, thus, all illusion
He pervades it all and is at the root of it
But is himself without base or build
Hari extends upto Hari only
He is the farthest and He is nearest
And strange is He
Who is in, as well as beyond, this world
As milk in butter
Or fire in wood
Or seed in tree
Or branch in stem
Or fruit in flower
So permeates Hari in the world with all his
immeasurable joys
Realize this fact just once
And you shall instantly cross over the
limitless Turbulent ocean that is this world.

Thus, I have tried to present a cross-section of Bahiji's poetic achievements. It is not possible here to give a critical estimate of the language, prosody, sentiments and emotions in his poetry. Nor is it easy to analyse the pieces presented above. That is why a representative selection of his poems has been given which may reveal glimpses of his poetic achievements and qualities of language, prosody, theme, attitude, emotions, etc. to the reader. In the largest collection of his lyrics and songs *Pada Ratnakar*, his miscellaneous poetic writings have also been included which indicate his personal inclinations. There is no systematic arrangement, theme-wise, in this portion. Bahiji went on giving poetic expression to the ideas and sentiments as these occurred to him from time to time. These have been placed under the following heads in the miscellaneous section :

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 'Advice to a Gentleman Lover', | 'Jada Bharat, Above All |
| 'The State of Love', | Ambiguities', |
| 'The Story of the Brahmin, | 'The Departure of Sharbhang |
| and the Scorpion', | Rishi to the Abode of |
| 'Manik's Donation', | Brahma', |
| 'The Philosophers' Stone', | 'The teacher Drone and |
| 'Hospitality', | Kaurava-Pandava Disciples', |
| 'The Hospitality of the Pigeon', | 'Strange Offering to Guru by |
| 'Kingly Duties and Strange | the Disciple', |
| Friendly Duties', | 'The Birth of Draupadi from |
| 'The Ramifications of | the Yajna', |
| Attachment', | 'The Chaste Behaviour of |
| 'Narad, the Expert Singer' of | Arjuna and Urvashi's Rebuke |
| the Holy Name', | as Blessing in Disguise', |
| 'The mother's Sermon to | 'The Ill-Effects of not Donat- |
| Dhruva', | ing Grains', |
| 'The Devotion of Prahlad | 'The Greatness of Bhakti', |
| While Sitting Atop Burning | 'The Instruction of the God of |
| Wood', | Death (Yama) to his |
| 'Maharishi Vashishtha', | Messengers', |
| 'The Rare Devotee Shukdev', | |

'Hailing Satis Faithful to Their Spouses',	'What a Child Desires',
'The Heaven of Vaishnavites, Shri Raghunath Das Goswami',	'Maternal Love',
'Gods Reside in Every Fibre of Mother Cow',	'Surrender',
'Cow-Slaughter Must End Immediately',	'The Ill-Effects of Provoking Someone to Leave the Path of Dharma',
'Prayer for Mother Cow',	'The Feeling of General Welfare'
'The Daily Prayer of a Child',	'Prayers to the Festival of Lamps',
	'Good Wishes',
	'Self Surrender', etc.

Almost all the poems collected in *Pada Ratnakar*, were published in *Kalyan* as also in several other collections published earlier. Even then, the Gita Press, Gorakhpur, has done a signal service to the memory of Bhaiji by publishing all of them in this large collection in an orderly and systematic form.

Bhaiji considered poetry as a means of Bhakti. He also instructed worldly people, suffering from ills borne of desires and attachments, on these very lines. Poetry, to him, was not a play of words and phrases but a medium of worship and adoration. Whereas other Indian poets spent their poetic skill in delineating the beauties and the emotions of ordinary men and women moved by carnal desires, Bhaiji in his poetic creations and compositions dealt only with the innumerable aspects of the cosmic play of the Divine. He was, of course, very careful to observe all the rules of prosody and rhythm. He made full use of the power and beauty of words and phrases and poetic embellishments and ornamentation. The blend of meaningful words and poetic qualities in his creations reminds the readers of the great devotional poets of earlier times who sang, in their charming styles, of the sweetness and beauty of Lord Krishna. But we will have to accept the fact that in Bhaiji's compositions, pre-eminence was given to the expression of the feelings and emotions and not merely to the poetic embellishments. "If discriminating readers will have the sense to see, they will find

poetic qualities too, otherwise these compositions do contain reverential references to Radha-Krishna.”

Man's genius is not confined to any one field nor is his capacity limited to any special work. Its flowering can be observed in miraculous achievements on land, over the seas, in the skies, during the days and nights, anywhere and anytime. A genius can weave his magic in any field of art. Hanuman Prasad Poddar was an eloquent speaker and skilled organiser. He was both a man of religion and a man of the world. He was a fine poet and also a good writer and essayist. He had the capacity to write short articles and essays as well as large works. The vast number of his writings and books bear witness to this fact. But we should not forget at the same time that his entire life was dedicated to the pursuit of the Divine. This is borne out by all his works, poems, articles, books and lectures. His first article was published in the monthly magazine *Maryada* in 1911 in its January issue. It was entitled 'Worship of the Motherland'.

As has been said from the beginning of this work Bhaiji's life, his faith, in fact, the entire activities of his existence were infused with spirituality. The cosmic play of the Lord has been the subject of his essays, poems, lectures and dialogues. Bhaiji himself went into raptures while writing of his vision of talking about it and inspired the same feeling in others. We can, therefore, conclude that whatever may have been the nature of his writings and essays outwardly, it was always inspired by his spiritual ideals. His writings on social, political, ethical and other such subjects had the undercurrent of devotion to the Divinity. He also came in contact with great men in the field of spirituality during his work in connection with the monthly magazine *Kalyan*. He also got ample opportunity to read and contemplate and translate several important works on sacred books. The objective of *Kalyan* was also purely spiritual. All this gave depth and dynamism to his spiritual pursuits.

We can divide Bhaiji's prose writings and essays in the following four sub-heads on the basis of the themes:

1. Spiritual
2. Patriotic
3. Ethical
4. Miscellaneous (advice, reminiscences, social writings)

The writings, covered by the above sub-heads, include his essays, letters, commentaries, editorials and talks in scattered form. Some of it has been published through the efforts of his friends and colleagues. The rest is to be found in the pages of the magazine *Kalyan*. His residence in Calcutta came as a boon to him in his pursuit of literature. He got the opportunity there to meet several eminent Hindi, English and Bengali journalists, writers, poets and scholars. Among these were: Shri Radha Mohan Mukherji, Shri Yashodananda Akhauri, Shri Ram Lal Verma, Shri Navajadik Lal Shrivastava, Shri Amrit Lal Chakraverty, the editor of *Calcutta Samachar* Shri Jhabarmalla Sharma, the editor of *Bharat Mitra*, Babu Bal Mukund Gupta, Pt. Laxman Narayan Garde, etc. These contacts gave a fillip to his genius. Bhaiji knew several languages, but only Hindi, English and Bengali were current in Calcutta. Bhaiji had a mastery of these languages. But for the sake of widest possible dissemination of his ideas and ideals and the play of the Divine in its varied forms he chose to write mainly in Hindi. Two dear colleagues of Bhaiji, Shri Chimanlal Goswami and Dr. Bhagwati Singh have written in *Pawan Smarana*: "It is not incumbent on a saint also to be a scholar and writer. But Bhaiji was a great saint as well as a writer, a poet and an author of books of the highest order. The world is benefited by the very being of a saintly person—by his sight, touch and speech. But Bhaiji revealed true knowledge also by his mature ideas, eloquent speech and powerful writings. He was a writer of great eminence and had deep knowledge of the Shastras; at the same time, he established a record in the field of journalism as well and made highly beneficial religious and spiritual literature available at cheap price. Thus, he did pioneering work in making good literature available to all."

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar had been entangled in many intricate situations during his childhood and after; yet this did not distract him from his many activities because of his firm faith and strong resolution. He went on reading and writing, establishing spiritual, literary, social and ethical institutions and serving them till he was struck down by cancer. His published writings are :

Spiritual Essays

1. *Shri Radha Madhava Chintan* (Contemplation of Shri Radha Madhava)
2. *Shri Radha Madhava Chintan* (Appendix)
3. *Bhagvad Charcha* Part-I (Discourses on the Divinity)
4. *Bhagvad Charcha* Part-II
5. *Bagvad Charcha* Part-III
6. *Bhagvad Charcha* Part-IV
7. *Bhagvad Charcha* Part-V
8. *Poorna Samarpan* (Total Surrender)
9. *Bhava Rog Ki Ram Ban Dawa* (Panacea of all worldly ills)

Essays on Ethical and Social Reconstruction

10. *Samaj Kis Or Jaa Raha Hai?* (Wither Society)
11. *Kalyan Kunj* Part-I (The bower of welfare)
12. *Kalyan Kunj* Part-II
13. *Kalyan Kunj* Part-III
14. *Manava Kalyan Ke Sadhan* (The paths to human welfare)
15. *Divya Sukh Ki Sarita* (The stream of divine bliss)
16. *Saphalta Ke Shikhar Ki Sidhiyan* (The steps to the peak of success)
17. *Parmarth Ki Mandakini* (Sacred river Mandakini of transcene)
18. *Dainik Kalyan Sutra* (Aphorisms for daily routine for welfare)
19. *Anand Ki Laharen* (The waves of Bliss)

20. *Din-Dukhiyon Ke Prati Kartavya* (Duty towards the aggrieved and the poor)
21. *Upanishadon Ke 14 Ratna* (14 jewels of the Upanishads)
22. *Nari Shiksha* (Women's Education)
23. *Stri Dharma Prashonttari* (Questions and answers on Duties of Women)
24. *Vivah Mein Dahez* (Dowry in marriage)
25. *Cinema Manoranjan ya Vinash* (Is cinema an instrument of entertainment or destruction?)
26. *Hindu Sanskriti Ka Swarup* (The nature of Hindu culture)
27. *Vartman Shiksha* (Contemporary education)
28. *Govadh Bharat Ka Kalank* (Cow-slaughter is a blot on India)
29. *Bal Poorvak Mandir Pravash* (Forcible entry into temples)
30. *Hindu Kya Karen?* (What should the Hindus do?)
31. *Samaj Sudhar* (Social Reform)
32. *Manava Dharma* (The Religion of Humanity)
33. *Sadhan Path* (The Religion of Spiritual Pursuits)
34. *Bhagvannam* (The Holy Name)
35. *Divya Sandesh* (The Divine Message)
36. *Gita Mein Vishwaroop* (The Cosmic Form of the Divine of the Gita)
37. *Brahmacharya* (The Celibacy as a Worship of the Divine)
38. *Satsang Ke Bikhare Moiti* (Scattered Pearls of the Company of Saints)
39. *Man Ko Vash Mein Karane Ke Upaaya* (Methods to control the mind).
40. *Manushya Ka Sarvapriya Saphal Jiwan Bane* (Good of Human life should be successful life)
41. *Jivan Mein Utaarne Ki 16 Baten* (16 points that ought to be followed in life)
42. *Kalyankari Acharan* (Beneficial conduct)
43. *Prarthana* (Prayer)
44. *Gopi Prem* (The love of the Gopis)

45. *Ras Aur Bhaawa* (Emotion and its expressions)
46. *Parmaarth Ki Pagdandiyan* (The steps towards transcendental life)
47. *Radha Janmashtami Ki Prachinta* (The Ancient Origin of Radha Janmashtami)
48. *Mahima Aur Pooja Vidhi* (The Glory of God and the Method of Worship)
49. *Ramlila Ka Rahasya* (The meaning of Ram Lila)
50. *Shri Krishna Mahima Ka Swarup* (The Nature of Shri Krishna's Glory)
51. *Poorna Paratpar Shri Krishna Ka Avirbhawa* (The incarnation of Krishna as the Supreme Divinity)
52. *Bhagvan Shri Krishna Ka Avirbhava* (The incarnation of Lord Krishna)
53. *Swayam Bhagwan Kab Aur Kyon Ate Hain?* (When does God incarnate himself and Why?)

Besides these collections, Bhaiji's commentaries are also quite voluminous. He wrote the commentary of *Narad Bhakti Sutra* (Aphorism on Bhakti by Narad) and it was published under the title *Prem Darshan*. He also wrote detailed commentaries of *Rama Charit Manas*, *Vinaya Patrika*, *Dohavali*, etc.

Bhaiji used Sanskritized Hindi in all his prose writings but it is not unintelligible to an ordinary reader of Hindi. He had no ambition to be a writer. His concern was to carry to his fellow beings the innermost thoughts and ideas of his heart. He always expressed himself in short and simple sentences so that the difficulty in following them they be avoided. If some phrase or sentence was not clear, he would express it in another form to make it intelligible. He judged the success of his effort only by whether the meaning of what he wrote was fully grasped by the reader. That indeed is the hall-mark of any mature literary creation. There is hardly any writing of Bhaiji that was not published in *Kalyan* which was edited by him and was the messenger of spiritual truths on international level. He used to weave pure pearls of meaningful ideas in the thread of short, simple sentences. Even difficult philosophical ideas were made

crystal clear by him for the lay readers. If the readers want to grasp the full significance of Bhaiji's writings, they will have to go through all his works, listed above.

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was well-known as an editor not only in India but throughout the world. He derived utmost spiritual benefit out of the editing of several magazines, *Kalyan* in particular. As an editor his emphasis was on simplicity, intelligibility, naturalness and effectiveness in the presentation of various themes. Monthly magazines demand a different type of editing to what is required in daily newspapers. In daily newspapers, emphasis is on the editing of news while in the magazine journalism, the emphasis shifts on the expression of views. The editor of such a magazine is doubly successful if he is able to keep himself almost entirely in the background and brings the author to the forefront. Bhaiji was to be seen in *Kalyan* not in person but in his editing and presentation.

The story of the birth of *Kalyan* is an interesting episode. In the year 1926, the annual session of Marwari Agarwal Mahasabha was to be held at Delhi. The Chairman of its Reception Committee was Shri Atma Ram Khemka. He was well-versed in Shashtras but could not write his speech in Hindi. At the instance of Shri Jaya Dayal Goendka and Shri Jamanalal Bajaj, Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar had to write the speech for him. Bhaiji surprised everyone by writing and getting a fine speech published in just one day. Seth Ghanshyam Das Birla usually did not agree with the views of Bhaiji, but even he liked that speech. Birlaji proposed to Bhaiji the following day that he should bring out a periodical with the assistance of some friends to disseminate his ideas. Bhaiji expressed some hesitation as he did not have any experience of editing, but the seed for such a publication had been sown and it fructified later in the form of *Kalyan*. Bhaiji was travelling with Shri Jaya Dayal Goendka from Rewari to Bhiwani in Rajasthan. Bhaiji's proposal came up for discussion during the journey. Seth Jaya Dayal Goendka liked the proposal very much. One of his friends, Lacchi Ramji Murodia also joined in the effort and he

got the consent of Bhaiji to devote two hours daily for the editing of the proposed periodical. The name *Kalyan* occurred to Bhaiji on Chaitra Shukla 9, Samvat 1983 which was Rama Navami, the Birth Day of Lord Rama. It was at once decided to bring out the magazine from the day of Akshaya Triteeya. It could not come out on the due date, but Shri Krishna Das, proprietor of Shri Khemraj Shri Krishna Das Press, arranged for the registration of the periodical. On Shravan Krishna Ekadashi, Samvat 1983, the first issue of *Kalyan* came out. On the frontispiece was published the devotional lyric *Bandon Charan Saroj Tumhare*—(I sing the praises of Thy Lotus feet) and on the second page was the editorial, which said: “All deserve *Kalyan*—their welfare and emancipation. It is the general desire of one and all. The publication of *Kalyan* is a recognition of this need. The person who has been given the responsibility of editing *Kalyan*, knows this fact well. He is not qualified and hasn't the ability to discharge this responsibility; he is far away from the ideal of *Kalyan*, but he does feel the necessity and the urge for this ideal. If he is able to serve *Kalyan*, may be, he too will be able to realize to some extent his own *Kalyan*. Hence, in spite of his serious shortcomings, he has taken over this responsibility with full faith in the grace of God that is ever present and with the blessings of the great and saintly souls.” Bhaiji went to Mahatma Gandhi along with Shri Jamnalal Bajaj to receive his blessings for *Kalyan*. Gandhiji was overjoyed at the proposal, and said, “Observe two rules in editing *Kalyan*: One, do not accept any outside advertisements; and two, do not publish book-reviews in it.” Explaining these conditions further, Bapu said, “You will naturally accept advertisements after going through them and ensuring that they are not ugly and do not practice deception on the readers. But when you are flooded with advertisements and advertisers begin paying you handsomely for them, your colleagues will begin to argue that these should be accepted *in toto* as they are yielding such enormous revenue. As soon as the temptation for money has the upper hand, the concern for the general

welfare will become secondary. So, do make it a rule at the inception that outside advertisements will not be entertained at all. As for the book-reviews, most of the persons sending books for review will naturally expect that you will only praise them in the pages of your magazine. Rare are the persons who will send books for a balanced review. Under these conditions, you will either have to eulogise the book even if it does not deserve praise, or you will antagonize the author or the publisher concerned. So my suggestion is not to publish book-reviews.” Bhaiji said in reply, “Bapu, we want your blessings. God will give us strength. We shall observe both the rules strictly.” And Bhaiji did do so in *Kalyan*. *Kalyan* went ahead step by step towards the pinnacle of glory. In time it became an internationally known magazine and a mature medium for the message of spirituality. It brought out 46 special numbers. It could not bring out a special number during the first year of its publication. But later on, it brought out such numbers on the Holy name, on the Bhaktas, on the *Gita*, on the *Ramayana*, on Shri Krishna, on Ishwar, on the world, on Shakti or Divine force, etc. These were, as already indicated, 46 in number. These special numbers demonstrated superb acumen in editing. All this provided excellent opportunity to Bhaiji to extend the gamut of his scholarship and deep knowledge of a variety of subjects. In fact, his achievements in this direction were phenomenal. These special numbers of *Kalyan* proved a blessing to the Hindi knowing people.

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar and also the well-wishers of the Gita Press evolved a plan to disseminate overseas the material published in *Kalyan* so that people of other countries may also benefit from it. This could be done only through the medium of English since it was known more or less in all parts of the world. Hence from January, 1934, *Kalyan* began publication in English also and it was titled ‘*Kalyan Kalpataru*’. Its editors were Shri Chimanlal Goswami and Shri M.A. Shastri who worked under the guidance of Bhaiji. Its circulation was 5000 and it published 32 special numbers.

The *Mahabharata* is a voluminous work. Indians have heard of it but few have read it. Bhaiji felt this need and began editing a monthly magazine *Mahabharata* also. It continued publication from 1955 to 1962. Several special numbers were also brought out during this period such as *Sampoorna* (full) *Mahabharata*, *Harivansh* (a part of the *Mahabharata*), *Sanat-sujaateeya* (with commentary by Shankaracharya), *Jaimineeya-shwamedh* and complete *Valmiki Ramayana*. The first special number *Bhagvan Namank* was also published. Everyone was highly impressed by the editorial capacity of Bhaiji after the publication of the above special number. Even highly realized saints were attracted towards him for his unusual acumen. Bhaiji was at that time preparing plans to go and live the life of a recluse on the banks of the Ganga. But the duties of *Kalyan* had the better of his plans to go into the seclusion. The work of *Kalyan* was being done for humanity while the plan to go to the banks of the Ganga was for his individual self. Personal inclination bowed to the collective benefit. And so Bhaiji continued his activities as a writer, editor and publisher.

Cultural Activities

The essence of Hanuman Prasad's life was doing good to others. His entire life was a worship of the Divine. Every moment of his daily life was inspired by the sense of duty, by Dharma. His service to society, humanity, religion and culture all served his spiritual pursuit. Religion infused all his social activities. His ideas, conduct, dress, expression, deeds, knowledge, devotion—everyone of them reflected culture of the noblest order. What is culture after all if not the beauty of one's thought? When such a beauty and grace reflects itself in all the activities of a person, we call it culture. When the inner stream of joy blends and manifests itself in the day-to-day work of a person, we call it culture. Again, we may say that when the inner feelings of a person or his goodwill for all expresses itself in the form of festive joy we call such a person; a person of culture.

The spiritual awareness of Bhaiji expressed itself through the medium of his various activities. He was very fond of music but only of that music which was concerned with the praise of the Lord. He was deeply interested in dramatic performances but only in such performances which depicted the innumerable graces of Radha and Krishna. Bhaiji was fond of dance as well but only when it was a medium to praise Lord Krishna or was an offering to him. The Gita Vatika in Gorakhpur was agog throughout the year with spiritual music, plays and dances. Radhashtami celebrations, Janmashtami celebrations, devotional music and bhajan-kirtan, etc. went on year after year. Sometimes some famous devotional singer was invited to give his performance. Mention should be made particularly of Radhashtami celebration which was commenced by Bhaiji and Pujya Babaji (Swami Chakradharji) who went on improving it with loving care. It has now burgeoned into a mighty tree under whose shade lakhs of people come to find peace and joy and turn towards the fulfilment of the ultimate aspiration of human life. It is like a beacon light that enlightens and indicates the right path and the right direction to all those aspirants who would like to taste the sweets of ultimate Bliss. Bhaiji always sacrificed his personal interests for the sake of others. He arranged monetary assistance for the medical care of various families, for schooling of children of the poor, for their examination fee, for the expenses of marriage of girls, for feed and fodder for cows. And he did all this without anyone coming to know of his action. He often said that not even our left hand should know what our right hand is doing. While helping others, he never let anyone feel that the person receiving help was in any way obliged to him, nor did he influence the social ideas of any poor person through such help. He was always aware of the truth that the real giver was someone else, and not he.

People come and people depart from this world, but there are some people whose coming to this earth has a special significance. Such persons stake their all for the good of others,

and when they die leave such a brilliant light after their departure that it illumines the path of the poor and the suffering humanity surrounded with darkness all around. Bhaiji was such a person. It was impossible to distinguish between spiritual and cultural aspects of his personality. One could not find a trace of anything mundane in him since he was totally removed from worldly attractions and attachments. The world, for him, was permeated with Brahma, the Supreme Being, and Brahma consciousness was all the world he was aware of. So, ordinary songs and dances did not constitute to him culture as he understood it and lived it. As we have already mentioned earlier, this world existed for him only when he was pursuing his spiritual ideals, but it disappeared as soon as he realized his spiritual goal. It was, for him totally transformed into the Divine. In this sense, each plan, each action of Bhaiji was permeated with spiritual culture. The only difference is that whereas worldly culture aims at pleasing and captivating worldly people, spiritual culture aims at pleasing and captivating that ultimate and Supreme Being who is the moving force behind this world. This was the culture in which Bhaiji found joy and he assimilated it. He used to be personally present in kirtans, dances, musical gatherings, plays, etc. While at Ratangarh, he always participated in Akhand Kirtan and assembly of the saints. It was at his instance that Swami Chakradharji Maharaj (Babaji) continued the repetition of the Holy name three lakh times each day for a number of years. It was, again, Bhaiji who started the Akhand Kirtan at Gita Vatika, Gorakhpur, and it is still continuing. Radha's birth day celebration was also started by Bhaiji and it is continuing till this day with even greater enthusiasm. Bhaiji called it *Uddam* (intense) *Samkirtan*. Those participating in it often lost outer consciousness and forgot everything else except the Holy name. Referring to such ecstatic condition, *Pawan Snaran* has this: "An old man with long, white flowing beard would be dancing with abandon in one corner while young people and boys would be jumping around with frenzy elsewhere. People of all ages, standards of

education, status participated in the ecstatic kirtan and uttered the Holy name with as much force and feeling as they could command. Among those who so participated in this rapturous kirtan were people with the highest academic degree, those who were unlettered, the wealthy and the poor and people of middle means, judges of high courts, professors, doctors, government officials and simple village folk. It was Bhaiji's inspiration and capacity that made people of such diverse classes come to a common platform, forget themselves and dance with ecstasy while uttering the Holy name. We felt like calling Bhaiji the New Chaitanya."

Bhaiji's cultural faith found expression in establishing and running institutions for cow protection, helping the poor, disseminating the Holy name, kindness to all, realization of the Divinity in every activity of the world and seeing His presence everywhere. He gave active support to the movement for the restoration of Shri Rama's Janmabhumi in Ayodhya, Shri Krishna Janamasthan Sewa Sangh as also to the Ved Bhawan Trust for establishing such Bhawans in the four premier religious places in India (namely Badrinath, Puri, Dwarka and Rameshwaram). He also participated or lent support to the cow-protection agitation, service to the diseased, particularly those suffering from leprosy. The large number of institutions, organisations, spiritual societies, temples, places of worship, dharamshalas, guest-houses, Satsang Mandals, etc. are glowing reminders of the sacred and versatile cultural personality of Bhaiji. It is the presence of such blessed sons of God that spreads joy everywhere on this earth, that is a blessing to all human beings and that gives positive hope to the entire creation.

V

Worldwide Acclaim

THE METHOD of working of Karmayogis—great men of action—is highly infectious. They take up several works, establish institutions, organize seminars and conferences and conduct them to make human life more enjoyable and fruitful in every manner. Ordinary members of society select their fields of activities according to their lights and under the impact of great men. There is extraordinary similarity in this respect between Mahatma Gandhi and Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar. Gandhiji carried on multifarious activities with the assistance of individuals, institutions and groups. Giving a direction to Indian National Congress, rendering help to those suffering from leprosy, running Sabarmati and Sewagram Ashrams and looking after the work of Charkhashalas and even the kitchens, serving cows, giving directions to several types of institutions in the country and abroad, working for the uplift of Harijans, carrying forward the Sarvodaya work, meeting a large number of eminent visitors daily, editing severally periodicals like *Harijan*, *Harijan Sewak* and *Harijan Bandhu*, thinking of humanity and contemplating the Divinity through the vow of silence, *japa*, meditation, etc., organising and carrying on satyagraha and going to prison during the British rule were only some of his activities. Like Gandhiji, Shri Poddarji was also associated with a number of social, national and religious institutions. Some of them were established by him and some others had received his assistance and support for their growth. At Poddarji's passing away innumerable individuals and

institutions felt as if they had been orphaned. Bhaiji looked after the persons suffering from leprosy and urged others to do so. The deaf and dumb, the poor and needy always received his sincere attention. He got temples and Dharamshalas constructed and organized seminars and *Kirtan Mandalis*. His hospitality was well-known. Saints and Mahatmas were received at his place with open arms. He organized their talks and rendered personal service to them. He worked for the reformation of the Marwari community. He was in touch with the revolutionaries who were staking their lives for the freedom of their Motherland and actively helped them. He participated in the satyagrah movements of Gandhiji and took up cow-protection work. Devotional pursuits and *japa* of the Holy name were the very breath of his life. He edited *Kalyan* and *Kalyan Kalpataru*. He was in touch with the people in India and abroad through correspondence. He extended assistance to poor and needy students by giving scholarships and stipends. He rendered help to the widows. He gave monetary assistance for the marriage of the daughters of poor families. He looked after the daily needs of the inmates of Gita Vatika. He edited and published ancient books and sacred scriptures. People were wonder-struck at the variety of activities Bhaiji carried on with vigour and enthusiasm. He had thus crossed all bonds of an individual and had become an institution. One could observe the Triveni—the trijunction of spirituality, social work and work for the nation in his life.

It is not necessary for a man of action to go round the world so that others may come to know of his achievements. The fragrance of good deeds is sufficiently strong, infectious and widespread to do that. A man of such deeds becomes a symbol for the entire world. His coming to this world is hailed as an event of great significance. Bhaiji's sphere of activities extended to the entire world. His *Kalyan* attracted the attention of all the countries of the world by the glitter of its writings. Bhaiji had provided spiritual help through *Kalyan* for Hindi-speaking people and through *Kalyan Kalpataru* in English for

English-speaking people. Several people from abroad, who were already in contact with Bhaiji through these two periodicals, came to India to meet him personally. Those who could not come also considered him their dear friend. It will be befitting if we give here certain observations of some of the prominent men who were influenced by *Kalyan* and who were in contact with Bhaiji through correspondence that was a source of immense joy to them.

Among those from abroad who gave expression to their heart-felt feelings and paid glowing tributes to Bhaiji are : Mrs. Devaki Devi, Shikh Narayan and Pandit Tilakdhari from Trinidad; Shri Vishnu Sharan Katare and Mrs. Braj Katare from Albert City in Canada; Shri Prem Chand Sood, Shri Ksheerodak Shastri Adhikari and Shri B.K. Goyal from Arya Samaj, London; Shri Bipin Chandra Tiwari from Belgium; Shri Dharmendra Nath from Nairobi, Africa; Shri Rajanikant Master from Johannesburg, South Africa; Shri U. Bharat from Guiana; Swami Krishna Nand, Swami Venkteshanand, Shri Janardan Chaube Nakachhedi, Shri Tekanand Thakur and Shri G. Thakur from Mauritius; Shri Chintamani Tripathi from Thailand; Shri Shivadas Verma and Shri Siyaram Arya from Mandala, Burma; Shri Om Prakash from Rangoon, Burma; Shri T.O. Bhatia from Dubai. Similarly, Bhaiji was also in contact with prominent personalities in the field of spiritual, social and political inside the country.

We would like to mention here that Bhaiji, through *Kalyan* in Hindi and *Kalyan Kalpataru* in English influenced all those in the world who had some inclination towards spiritual pursuits. What Bhaiji did was to water the seeds of spirituality already present and enabled them to grow. We would also like to think that through the spiritual ideals practised and preached by Bhaiji, the devotion for Krishna found its roots in the entire world. It was Bhaiji's endeavour which culminated in the planting of Krishna Bhakti on an international scale. It was through the medium of the special Number of *Kalyan* that the knowledge of Vedanta and Yoga and the worship of the Divine was

made known to the world. Hence all those, who were spiritually inclined in the world, came to know of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar's personality and his activities. Certain foreigners were in constant correspondence with him and used to seek his advice to resolve their personal problems.

Nor was the number of those who were attracted towards Bhaiji, in any way less in the country itself. He had won love and affection of a large number of saints, mahatmas, politicians, social workers and others. Some such names are : Shri Aurobindo, Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahamana Malaviya, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shankaracharyas of all the four seats, Swami Karpatriji and Swami Naradanand. It is not possible to give details of all such great men and their views about Bhaiji. But we would like to narrate an episode from Bhaiji's contact with the Father of the Nation.

Kalyan was about to launch its Special Number on the Holy name. Bhaiji has himself written about the incident :

"I went to Bapu with Shri Jamnalal Bajaj to request him to write a few words on Rama Nama. Bapu laughed and said : 'Why have you brought Jamnalalji with you? Do you think I will write something on his recommendation? Why have you not come to see me by yourself? Seth Jamnalalji smiled at Bapuji's remarks. I told Bapu, 'Bapuji, it is quite true. That was my intention.' Bapuji laughed and said, 'well, You are pardoned this time. But do not mistrust me next time.' Then he took out his pen and wrote down the message : 'Tulsidasji has written all that could be said of the glory of Rama Nama. All mantras, whether of twelve words (Dwadash) or of eight words (Ashtakshar) are beneficial and give peace to people entangled in worldly pursuits. No doubt, we have to depend on the *mantra* that gives us peace. But if we have not realized peace and are seeking it, Rama Nama is the philosopher's stone, that can transform us. It is said that God has thousand Names. It means that he can be called by innumerable names. That is why He is beyond all names and attributes. But the assistance of a Name

is necessary for human beings. And in this age even a fool and an unlettered person can also take the help of the *mantra* of one word (Ekakshar) i.e. Rama. Rama is in fact a one-word *mantra*. And there is no difference between Om and Rama. But we cannot prove the power of the Holy name through logic. It can be realised only if we have faith. While writing the above message, Bapu smiled and said, 'You have come to get my message for the world. But do you also practise what you want to preach? I will hand over the message only if you take a vow before me that you will do *japa* for some time daily; otherwise, no message from me will be available? I told him, 'Bapu, I do *japa* for some time daily. Now I shall increase the duration further.' Bapu said, 'Bhai, such a precious thing ought not to be given gratis', and handed over the message to me. I touched Bapu's feet and came away."

Mahamana Malaviyaji had also very affectionate and kind relations with Bhaiji. Bhaiji has written of him, "Once he visited Gorakhpur and stayed with me for two or three days. I was sitting at his feet the following day. He was all alone. He told me with great affection, 'Bhai I want to offer to you today a most precious and rare thing. I had received it as a boon from my mother. It is an extraordinary thing. I have not parted with it so far. But I am doing so today. It may appear insignificant. But it is a great blessing.' He continued speaking in this strain for about half an hour. My curiosity was aroused. I told him, 'Babuji, kindly give it to me quickly'. Then he said to me, 'It happened about 40 years back. One day, I went to my mother and most humbly asked her to give me a boon that wherever I went I should be successful. My mother placed her palm over my head and said, 'Child, I am giving you a most valuable thing. Whenever you go anywhere, you say 'Narayan, Narayan' in audible voice. Then you will always be successful. I received that *mantra* from her with deep faith and humility. Hanuman Prasad, I remember very clearly that since then whenever I forgot to utter 'Narayan, Narayan' while starting for some place, I was unsuccessful in my mission.'

Saying so, Malaviyaji was deeply moved. I accepted his boon with bowed head and have greatly benefited from it.”

Devotion to duty gives name and fame to a person without any publicity or advertisement. If one is constantly engaged in fruitful activities, it does have its impact in a wide field. The pursuits of Bhaiji, his struggle for the good of humanity and his self-sacrifice formed the basis on which his world-wide fame rested. *Pawan Smaran* a book published to welcome Bhaiji in public is a commemorative work of historical importance in which the views about Bhaiji of almost all the leaders in the field of politics and social service in the country have been included. We are giving below these views so that our readers may themselves assess Bhaiji's personality and universal respect he commanded.

We are glad to learn that a commemorative volume is being published by the friends of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar to express their gratitude to him. Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar has through Karma-Gyan-Bhakti (Works-knowledge-devotion), etc. and through *Kalyan* and its special numbers enlightening the truths of *Upanishad*, *Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagwat* and other ancient scriptures, and by publishing other such books from Gita Press, done a great service to the religious minded people all through his life. It is our wish that the people may follow the spiritual path pursued by him and persuade others to follow the age-long path of religion so that all may carry forward the traditions of *Kalyan*.

—Shrimad Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya
Swami Chandrashekharendra Saraswati Maharaj of
Sri Kanchi Kamkoti Peetham

There are few amongst religious people who are not acquainted with the great religious figure Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar. He has sown the seeds of Bhakti, religious faith and spiritual contemplation in and outside India through the medium of *Kalyan*. Lakhs of people have been initiated into

belief in the Divine and have begun pursuing religious discipline through the instrumentality of his articles. He lived what he preached. His conduct was and still is, a model for others. He met us twice or thrice during our journeys to the north. We stayed with him at Gorakhpur for three days. We immediately liked his sincere nature, conduct and sweet tongue. The religious world has suffered a great loss in his passing away.

Poddarij's work will continue to inspire the coming generations as well. It is our prayer to the Lord that the Gita Press family may follow the path shown by him and be of service to the Divine.

—Shrimad Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya Swami
Shri Vidyatirthji Maharaj Sharda Peeth, Shringeri

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar's name will always live in the cultural history of India. And his name will be immortal in the field of religious literature. He was a real benefactor of the eternal culture of India.

A session of All India Dharm Sangh was held in 1946 in a far off village, Dhebava, in Bihar. I went to northern India for the first time to preside over it. I was a guest in Gita Vatika, Gorakhpur, on my way to the conference and back. It was there that I met Shri Poddar for the first time. But I had known him during my childhood through the colourful special numbers of the magazine *Kalyan* while residing in a remote corner of Karnataka. Afterwards on many occasions, I came to know him more closely.

Shri Poddarji's work of preservation of Indian culture continued till the last moments of his life. His effort to disseminate healthy, pure and religious literature is worth emulating by all. He succeeded in his aim not only in India but abroad too. His love of God and of the cow, his patriotism, his reverence for elders, his affectionable nature, his strong faith—all these are worth emulating by us. He was a source of inspiration in the fields of preservation of culture and amelioration of others'

sufferings; but over and above this, people were surprised at his total dedication to the work of cow-protection and organisational capacity for that work.

His passing away has left a gap in the field of Indian culture which cannot be filled easily. May God give strength to his followers to complete the works that he had commenced.

—Shrimad Shri Abhinava Sachchidanand Tirthji Maharaj
Sharda Peeth, Dwarka Puri

Whatever may be said or written in praise of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar will fall short of the reality of his greatness.

He was a sincere worshipper of God, religion, nation, culture and noble conduct in accordance with the Indian traditions. His faith and sense of devotion was extraordinary. None else could have rendered the sort of service to the nation he did to the Hindu religion, culture and civilisation through the excellent magazines *Kalyan* and *Kalyan Kalpataru*. Through special numbers of *Kalyan*, he made the secrets of ancient Indian scriptures, writings on Tantra, history and Puranas available not only to the elite few but to the masses. It was due to his incessant efforts that even such works whose existence was unknown earlier, became well-known to scholars and discriminating readers and they could engage in reading, contemplation and assimilation of such writing. This was a blessing to India which will be ever cherished by posterity.

The guileless and simple nature of Poddarji became apparent to anyone on the very first glimpse of him. He was liked alike by men, women and children, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, high and low. Hardly could anyone have detected any trace of anger or irritation on his face. He always met everyone in a happy mood and talked intimately in that mood to even the persons whom he had never met earlier treating them as if they were his friends for years. People returned from his place happy and contented as if they had got all that they had wished to achieve.

His capacity for work was such that it appeared God had bestowed on him an immense power for action. He was equally versed in writing, speech making, editing and poetic art, etc. He could not sit idle even for a moment if he undertook some work, and would stop only when the work was completed. He also took a prominent part in the struggle for the freedom of the country. He successfully carried on the agitation against the Hindu Code Bill. There was no part of the agitation against cow-slaughter in which he did not participate actively.

There can be no doubt that his soul has been resting in peace and happiness after his departure from this world. Even then, as a matter of my duty, I sincerely pray for him to my Lords Jagnannath and Chandramaulishwara and the Divine Mother.

—Shrimad Jagatguru Swami Shri Niranjandeo Tirthji Maharaj
Goverdhan Peeth, Jagannath Puri

The detached karmyogi Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was a precious treasure of Indian thought. He was a living embodiment of the Vaishnava way and of Bhakti of Mathura type. The Gita Press and its publications and the magazine *Kalyan* are abiding memorials to his greatness and will be cherished for long. He awakened thousands through his spiritual writings. His departure is a great loss to us all.

—Shri Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya Swami Shri Shantanandji Maharaj, Jyotish Peeth, Badarikashram (Uttarakhand)

I have known Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar for a long time. He used to visit me off and on. He was a gem of Sanatan Dharma and Hindu race. When the top leaders of Sanatan Dharma began their opposition of the Hindu Code Bill, Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar also gave them his support. He strongly spoke at conferences against the Bill. When the agitation against cow-slaughter was launched by Swami Karpatriji

Shri Hanuman Prasad lent his full support to it personally and through monetary help. When the proposal to divide India was being mooted and we launched a movement against it, he was with us. Every action in the interest of Sanatan Dharma or for protection of Hindu religion saw him in the forefront and he staked his all for it. When innocent sadhus and saints were facing bullets for the cause of the cow in a protest demonstration, he was with me on the dais. When Shri Karpatriji went to jail in the cow-protection agitation Poddarji at once visited the prison to see him. He was a great devotee of Brahmins and the cow.

He was a believer in the Varnashrama Dharma and had firm faith in the Shashtras, and this faith was confirmed by his experience. His meeting with the spirit of a Parsee gentleman at Bombay is a strange episode. The spirit had made appearance before him and talked to him and had requested him to perform Shradha (last rites) at Gaya so that he could be delivered from his troubles. Shri Poddarji arranged to do so by sending someone to Gaya after which the troubles had ended. After this event, his faith in Shradha in Shashtras had re-doubled. He has played a great part in propagating Sanatan Dharma. Who can forget this fact?

—Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya Swami Shri Krishna
Bodhashramji Maharaj

Who does not know of the services rendered by him to ancient Indian culture and religion through Gita Press and *Kalyan* which were run by him in an excellent manner. It is my sincere wish that the story of his devotion to the Divine, his wisdom and expertise in everything that he did, may inspire the coming generations who would like to serve humanity for ages to come.

—Acharya Vishwabandhu
Vishweshwaranand Sansthan
Hoshiarpur

Hanuman Prasad Baba always shed light through his good deeds and self-realization. This child was always near him—God is in this world, and He is beyond it—eternal and Supreme Brahma, and soul of all souls.

—Jan Janardan Satsang Samaroh-Anand Ma Anandmaiji

I have known Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar for the last three decades through his articles in *Kalyan* and I can say that his life was fully dedicated to a great and uplifting ideal. He was a model of all that a true Hindu would like to become. My best wishes for the success of the commemorative volume.

—Maharajadhiraj Shri Nepal Naresh

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar has rendered great services to Hinduism. It is only fitting that his services should be properly appreciated.

—Shri Chakravarti Rajgopalachari

The editor of *Kalyan* and the founder of the Gita Press Late Shri Hanuman Poddar has rendered valuable services to Indian literature, particularly religious literature, through his publications. These days it has become customary to run down religious works in our country in the name of secularism. In order to have equal respect for all the religions it is necessary that we study the literature of other religions as well as our own. As Indians, we can comprehend the history and culture of our country only if we study our religious literature. Viewed from this stand-point, the publication and dissemination on a large-scale of the religious works by Gita Press ought to be considered a great service to the nation and credit for this goes mainly to the dedicated and devoted work of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar.

I pay my homage to the memory of this dedicated soul and I hope that his successors will follow his footsteps and continue

the publication and propagation of healthy literature with the same zeal and make it easily available to all.

—Jayaprakash Narayan

I am glad to learn that the friends and well-wishers of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar are bringing out a commemorative volume. Shri Poddar's contribution to the regeneration of our culture through his work in editing *Kalyan* will be long cherished. He has rendered valuable service in popularising our religious literature with commentaries through low-priced publications.

I hope his good work will be continued with the same zeal. That will be the best way to perpetuate his memory.

—Varahgiri Venkata Giri, former President of India

I am writing these lines for Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar commemorative volume with mixed feelings. Shri Poddar was an ideal man. He was always engaged in doing good to others. The valuable work he did for the propagation of spiritual knowledge through *Kalyan* is well-known to its readers. Like sandal-wood he himself suffered but offered scent to others. It is natural to feel grieved at the departure of such a saintly soul. But I am also happy that the sweet smell of his good deeds is giving us joy even to this day. That is why I said in the beginning that I am writing this with mixed feelings. If our culture is still alive and flourishing today, the credit goes to the great men like Shri Poddar.

I hope this commemorative volume will continue to inspire us all.

—Gopal Swarup Pathak, former Vice-President of India

The managing of the Gita Press and founding and editing of *Kalyan* has immortalized Poddarji. The whole country will be

grateful for ages to come for his efforts in enriching our national language. The valuable gems he has given to Hindi literature through *Kalyan* have become a perennial source of inspiration for the present as well as future generation in this country and in the world. Where else can we find a truly dedicated social worker and spiritual aspirant like him who did his all to serve religion without asking anything in return?

His departure has left a void that can hardly be filled. But his dedicated life has become light to guide us in our worldly and other worldly paths.

—Kamlapati Tripathi, former Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was a person of sincere faith in religion and he truly led a religious life. The Gita Press and *Kalyan* bear witness to his dedicated endeavour. The literature that he has published from the Gita Press is so valuable and significant that the coming generations of this country, who have faith in true religion, will learn a lot from it and benefit to a very considerable extent. He gave his entire life to the cause of presenting our great cultural heritage to society so that our culture may become stronger and may attain greater glory than what is attained in the past.

The cheap editions of the *Gita*, the *Ramayana* and *Upanishads*, published in lakhs, will be lasting memorials of Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar. They are living monuments of his love for Vedic religion, for our ancient culture and for the great future of this country.

I am very glad to learn that a commemorative volume is being published to pay tributes to this great son of India for the great service he has rendered. Religion is the true guide of our mind and unless it stands on strong foundations no country can attain physical or spiritual greatness and become powerful and truly prosperous. The Gita Press has fulfilled this need with commendable success and I hope it will continue to do so in future also.

—Morarji Desai

His magazine *Kalyan* has found access to almost every home in the country. It is elegantly brought out and is instructive. The books, published by him, though valuable in subject matter, are available at nominal prices. If someone does not procure them and read them, he alone will be to blame. If spiritual traditions still persist in northern India, the credit goes to the Gita Press and Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar.

I have been in touch with him for the last 20 years through correspondence and I have held him in high esteem. I came in close contact with him some five years back when we established Chaturdham Ved-Bhawan Trust, whose Secretary is Shri Vishwanath Das. Shri Poddar agreed to become its Joint Secretary. I was persuaded to become its President. Shri Poddar acted upon what he said. I found him a highly religious and pure soul. His one and only aim has been the revival of our culture. India is at present a victim of the temptation for money and possessions and the chaos resulting from this. We have again to establish peace in this land. It is possible only through the revival of our culture which lays down that duty is above rights and charity is better than grabbing wealth and property. Both the aspects of spiritual life could be easily discerned in a developed form in Poddarji. Gandhiji won freedom for our nation and he wanted to establish Rama Rajya through constructive means. He was a great devotee of God too. Shri Poddar also took up the same work and carried it forward. He spent the last days of his life in meditation. In his departure, we have lost an intensely religious and pure human being who was deeply dedicated to religion, philosophy and culture and was a selfless servant of the people. I am confident his soul has found eternal peace in the Supreme being.

I hope and trust that the work of the Gita Press will continue as it was going on during the lifetime of Shri Poddar who carried it on with great sincerity, and thus the dissemination of our religion, spirituality and culture will go ahead without hitch so that it contributes to our national unity.

—M. Anant Shayanam Ayyangar, former Governor

I was deeply grieved to learn the demise of my revered friend Hanuman Prasad Poddar. Our country, literature and society have suffered a setback by his departure. An extraordinary personality is, alas, no more amidst us. We can hardly find a person today in the world who could equal him in religious pursuits and patriotism. It is difficult to assess the amount of work done by him and the number of people who benefited by his work. My prayer is that his handsome work may continue with efficiency.

—Sri Shri Prakasa, former Governor

Among the chain of special numbers of *Kalyan*, the *Gita Number* which was published several years back was perhaps the first large sized number for which, as I remember, I was asked by Hanuman Prasadji not only to send an article but also suggest names of people from Karnataka who could contribute in an authentic manner on the great truths of the *Gita*. I had sent to him one or two articles and three or four names.

Two things were made clear to me from that effort of Shri Poddarji—one, that he considered the *Gita* as a significant and universal work towards which the attention of the entire country could be drawn, and two, that he had invited the views of the knowledgeable people from all parts of India on the *Gita*.

Needless to say the *Gita Number* was a signal success and several other special numbers were published later along that line. Most of them contain valuable articles written by well-known scholars and are colourful with pretty pictures.

Their printing has all along been of the highest order and the type used was bold so that even neo-literates could read them easily.

Another important occasion that I can recollect is an exhibition of the various editions of the *Gita* in different languages of India and commentaries on that book. I remember that their

number was 550 or thereabouts. It was another example of Poddarji's inventiveness.

Decorated with pictures, Hindi monthly *Kalyan* has always been a most likeable magazine on devotional topics. *Kalyan Kalpataru* in English has similarly found favour with the English-knowing readers.

The most significant and memorable work of Shri Poddarji has been the extension and consolidation of a great organization centred around the Gita Press whose main function is printing and publication of the *Gita*. Of course, compared with the work of the Bible Society or its branches concerned with the publication of the Bible, in translation, in 125 languages, and with circulation figures crossing a crore, the work of the Gita Press appears insufficient, particularly when we consider the fact that the *Gita* is the Bible of forty-five crore Hindus.

Still it required incessant toil on the part of Poddarji to achieve what he did. This shows that there is no dearth in our country of men who are dedicated and prepared to stake their lives for noble causes, but there is certainly some deficiency in the mental make-up of the people in general. It is my wish that the Hindus of the coming generations may appreciate the efforts that have been made earlier and that an important work like the *Gita*, in different languages, may reach not only our own people but to people abroad as a book to be treasured. The *Gita* is a work of great depths and is at the same time intelligible. It speaks of universal truths and fulfils the demands of our heart and our mind. As such, whatever we do towards popularizing it will be worth our endeavour. Shri Poddar has shown us the path. Our best tribute to him will be to continue the work that he began and carried out, and to expand it so that the message of the *Gita* can reach every heart and every mind and illumine the path of men and women of this country.

—Dr. R.R. Diwakar, Former Governor

I am glad I have been invited to participate in the *Yajna* to commemorate Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar, former editor of *Kalyan*, published from the Gita Press. Shri Poddar was a philosopher and a thinker of eminence and so had clear ideas as to what was good for Indian Society. I was reminded of a couple of interesting occasions when I met him. He was a businessman and as such it was difficult for us to think that he would be able to desist totally from commercial practices and would feel happy and contented only in serving the cause of the spiritual literature through *Kalyan* and in propagation of our culture.

The essential features of Vedanta can sometimes be grasped on mental level, but unless they are well assimilated, their inner significance is not revealed; and assimilation is not possible unless man reaches into the inner depths of his real nature.

India is a country of diverse view-points and schools of thought. While one school considers enlightenment as of supreme importance, another considers bhakti or devotion as the highest achievement, a third school thinks that *Karma* or the principle of work is the way leading to the pinnacle and a fourth accepts Yoga as the ultimate path and enables us to shoot the target. The aim of all these paths is to enlighten men about the great endeavours of our ancient sages to enable him to conquer his senses, to show to him his real nature and goal, to make him free from dualities and ambiguities and finally to reveal to him the effulgent face of ultimate truth. This view-point is acceptable by all schools of thought and it is also the great Vedantic message which *Kalyan* has been carrying on till today.

It is my view that the service rendered by Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar in this field will find mention among the best endeavours of mankind in this direction.

—U.N. Dhebar

Whenever I got an opportunity to come in contact with revered Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar, I was greatly impressed by his affectionate behaviour. He was a selfless social worker.

He used to help the flood-stricken people of Gorakhpur, Deoria and Basti by distributing blankets and food packets and arranging for shelter free of cost. He established leprosy homes and many social institutions and conducted them. But even after all this hectic activity, he was entirely egoless and did not hanker after name and fame.

He was an embodiment of simple living and high thinking. He did not entertain any other desire in the world except social service and grace of the Divine. He, in fact, led the life of a saint.

The good deeds done by a selfless and generous person like him will always be worth emulating.

—Chowdhury Charan Singh
Lucknow

I have been in touch with Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar in my political life through its social and religious aspects.

Shri Bhaiji was not only a publisher of spiritual literature from the Gita Press and editor of *Kalyan*, but its very life breath. He carried the message of Indian culture to the farthest corner of India through the Gita Press and *Kalyan*. Over and above this, he rendered immense service to the people of Gorakhpur during natural and unforeseen calamities. His great deeds will be reverentially recollected by all religious-minded people.

His practical ideas and realistic goodness will inspire and guide future generations as a beacon light.

—Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani
Lucknow

When I was President of Hindu Mahasabha, I got the opportunity to come in contact with Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar. It was a real good fortune to come in contact with a person who was a selfless worshipper of our culture and tradi-

tions. It was an auspicious day when I visited Gorakhnath Temple whose patron was my friend Mahant Digvijaya Nath. And it was doubly auspicious that I went to the Gita Press which has earned universal popularity. Several editions of the *Gita* are exhibited in the Gita Library and I remember that the Gita Press had printed sixty lakh copies of the *Gita* alone till that day. Now the number must have gone up to several crores.

The way the Gita Press published and publicised the best of our ancient religious text, has imparted faith and trust to our countrymen and given them strength of resolution. In fact, I learnt from the devoted work of Shri Hanuman Prasad that the *Gita* was not a book merely for saints and recluses but had been written to take its due place in every home of this country.

I hope *Kalyan* will continue to deliver the message of truth in the *Gita*, *Ramayana* and the great *Upanishads* and will contribute to the moral and spiritual uplift of our people. My prayer is that the great soul of our friend Poddarji may continue to inspire men and women and may bring to light the great truths of our Sanatan Dharma and our culture.

—N.C. Chatterji, President, West Bengal Rehabilitation
Work Review Committee

In the passing away of Shri Poddar, we have lost a great votary of Hindu religion and culture. He worked till the end of his life for the propagation of Hindu religion in the world which will find a permanent place in our national history. He was a living model of simple living and high thinking. He transformed the Gita Press and *Kalyan* into great institutions through his single-minded dedication. His death is a great loss to the nation. We can pay real tributes to him only if we carry forward the work undertaken by him.

—Atal Bihari Vajpai, President, Bharatiya Jan Sangh

It is difficult to do justice in writing to the greatness of Shri Poddar and his human qualities—his kindness, his affection for people and so on.

I came in contact with him some 30 years back and he had been treating me with great affection and love since then. In fact the entire Birla family has been very close to him.

Shri Hanuman Prasad was always particular to do only that which would please the person with whom he was dealing. He was always considerate to all and saw to it that the person, who had come to meet him should not feel aggrieved or pained. He had equal respect for all religions as, according to his view, all were different means to attain the same ultimate truth.

He always kept his real self in the background. His personality and the qualities of simplicity, kindness, feeling for the sufferings of others, etc. are well-known. His services through *Kalyan* have been recognized by the entire world and will always be cherished. No words will suffice to describe the great impact on the people of the *Ramayana* and the *Gita* published by the Gita Press.

It will be difficult to fill the void left by his departure.

—Vasant Kumar Birla, Calcutta

I have known Bhai Hanuman Prasadji since the Calcutta days when he carried on business and was, at the same time, an active participant in revolutionary activities. He roused the wrath of the Government in 1916 and was arrested. He had always been inclined towards a *satvika* way of life but he became an ardent devotee in jail. He was a businessman, went to jail for the sake of the country and came out of it as a devotee of the Divine.

He spent almost his entire life in doing good to others. None else has done as much work for the publication and propagation of Hindu shashtras as he has done, and these publications were so cheaply priced that they found their way to every home. The credit for this goes entirely to Bhaji.

If any poor or suffering person approached him either in person or through letter asking for help, he was never disappointed. He was not financially a rich person, but to the poor and the needy, he gave lavishly. He was kind-hearted, he mixed easily with all, he was a man of a happy disposition, generous and with a sharp intellect and he had deep knowledge of Shashtras. In the famine of 1996 (Vikram era) I toured Rajasthan with him. On a closer watch I found that whatever task he undertook he did it with firm resolution. Many people feel they have lost a great support in his departure; they are shelterless now. But it is only the physical body that has perished. His name and fame will always inspire people. I pay him sincere homage.

—Bhagirath Kanodia, Calcutta

Shri Poddar had deep affection for me. He was a revered person for me. I have seldom seen a man purer than him. He translated into life whatever he preached. His heart was soft as butter. He was simple as a child, a friend of everyone, full of the milk of human kindness. He was a benefactor of all by nature and he had a clean conscience. What else can be the attributes of a Bhakta of Hari?

He suffered from ill-health during the last days of his life, but even then he was *Swastha* or positioned in his real Self. His life had become stable in intelligence through constant spiritual pursuits. He had conquered anger and malice. He kept friendly relations even with those with whom he did not agree. Devotion of the Lord had permeated every cell of his body and his soul. Innocence and sweetness was his second nature. He could not bear to see anyone in grief. The stream of kindness overflowed from his heart.

He performed the task of great significance through the Gita Press by publishing and distributing the old texts in precise form and at cheap prices. As an editor of *Kalyan* he had become Kalyanamurti or totally identified with its mission. Indian religion and culture have undoubtedly suffered a great loss in his demise.

I do not find words to describe my relations with him. He always showered his affection on me during the last 45 years I knew him. When *Prem Yoga* was being printed in the Gita Press, I had the opportunity to be in his company for about three weeks. Since then, we progressively came closer and closer to each other. Little did I know that when I met him last at Rishikesh it would be our very last meeting. Let us hope that the Gita Bhawan and other institutions will continue to seek guidance from his life and thoughts because they are his true memorials. I offer my sincere tributes to my brother, Hanuman Prasadji.

—Viyogi Hari

Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar was dedicated to the pursuit of religion and to its spread. He lived and breathed religion. He was a Triveni—a tri-junction—of knowledge, works and devotion. He was a man of deep insight and resolute action. There was a unique blend of firm faith and depth of thought in him. He had been a fearless fighter for freedom of the country and was in the frontline of the agitation for cow-protection in his younger days. Dharma or religion was the *summum bonum* to him. The Gita Press, *Kalyan* and *Kalyan Kalpataru* and books on shashtras, religion, history and Puranas published in lakhs will continue to proclaim his name for ever. And he richly deserves all this. I am reminded that he had arranged to send lakhs of copies of the *Gita* to South America at nominal price, just on a written request. His life was entirely dedicated to religion. He considered religion as a friend of human beings—a friend who remains sincere to us till the last breath of our life and even after. It is the pious duty of all Sanatanists to pay their homage to such a great and pious soul.

—Shishir Kumar Sen
Editor Truth, Calcutta

Bhai Hanuman Prasad Poddar is no more. A unique personality has departed from amongst us. His life was pure as the water of the sacred river Janhwi (the Ganga). Only a person like Bhaiji, who was an ascetic of the highest order could make easily available to crores of people the invaluable wealth of Dharm Shashtras (Sacred scriptures), accumulating for ages in India, through his periodical *Kalyan*. If his achievement can be compared with the performance of some one else, it is Hanuman, the devotee of Rama. Just as Hanuman was successful in crossing the sea and discovering the whereabouts of Sita, similarly, it was the competence of Bhaiji that could seek out the invaluable heritage of Indian culture through the ages hidden in the unfathomable depths of Sanskrit works of Rishis and ancient scholars and thinkers and make it available to us. Every word and phrase that came from his pen had mantric power behind it. As readers went through his articles, his body and mind would be filled with peace and serenity, Bhaiji's writings will remind us of that great man for ages to come. His work and his literature will ever live from the Himalayas to Rameshwaram, in every home, in the pages of *Kalyan*. His memory will be ever cherished as a gem of Rajasthan, as a great son of India and as a true human being. Crores of Indian people bow to him and offer their sincerest tributes.

—Satya Narayan Tulsiyan
Secretary, Rajasthan Bharati
Delhi

Bhaiji's thoughts and aphorisms

Every breath of Bhaiji's life was dedicated to the accomplishment of work he undertook. He never wasted a single moment. That is why he could successfully produce such voluminous literature and carry on editorial work on such immense scale. At the same time, he served a large number of institutions with credit and organised seminars and conferences. There is not a single field of thought or activity to which he has not given

thought. His views were so mature and so simply expressed that they had become aphorisms. It is but proper here that we present these thoughts and aphorisms to our readers so that they can assess Bhaiji's creative genius. These are scattered in his collections of essays, letters, editorials and in the accounts of his daily discourses. Some of the more important thoughts and aphorisms have been included in *Pawan Smaran* and *Amar Sandesh* (Immortal Message) by their Editors. We are giving below examples taken from *Pawan Smaran* in his own words:

The ultimate goal

The one and only goal of man's life is attainment of God or His Love. All our actions, all dealings, all thoughts and resolutions and all activities of mind and intellect and body should flow from the awareness of this goal. God is our goal and life is a means to attain it.

Success

Remember that success in life consists in attaining God and not indulging in worldly pleasures. Satisfaction of senses can be attained in other forms of life as well, but attainment of the Divine is possible only in human life.

God

Mind cannot understand God, who is infinite, omnipresent, omniscient, all pervasive, Truth and Bliss—as mind acts in accordance with nature that is inanimate and limited. That which can be known by intellect is limited, theoretical and qualified only. If something is limited and produces a consequence and if something is qualified, it cannot be God. That which can be described by knowledge and intellect has a fixed form within the instrument of knowledge. Such a knowable entity cannot be omnipresent light and basis of all illumination. That which is enlightened by mind cannot be that which enlightens mind. The ultimate being or God is not knowable, it is not theoretical, it is not assessable to mind. It is itself

knowledge, self-evident, all consciousness, all light and self-illuminated. It is not an object of our intellectual exercise. But all intellectual attainments are possible because of Hari. He is himself all proof and all knowledge.

The form and the formless

God is formless as well as with form. He is still, exclusive, untrammelled and without a base and yet he is the creator, the preserver and destroyer of the creation, some thing special, omnipresent and basis of all manifestation. He is both the *Purush* and the *Prakrati*, the original creative forces, both conscious and unconscious of the universe. His manifested form can be known through actions without any desire for their results and he can be known as Eternal Brahma through knowledge. But his utterly sweet form of cosmic play can be realised only through Bhakti of love.

Avtar

Avtar means incarnation—descent of the ultimate Brahma. God is above everything, omnipresent, ever present and permeating everything. But he has hidden himself behind His supreme power, behind Maya or Yoga Maya (illusion). He manifests before all at his will. This is his incarnation. This is Avtar. God Vishnu too descends and the base is purest satwa (quality of guna). It is not correct to say that a man becomes God when he goes on developing his qualities and reaches the peak of his growth. This is called ascent and not descent. God descends and does not ascend.

The birth of the divine

God is not born like ordinary creatures of this world nor is His body a consequence of genetic process and made up of the five elements. The divine body of God is God Himself and not the physical, subtle or causal body wrapped in Maya. He is, in fact, neither ever born nor does he die. Try to unravel his significance and essence. Once you have even a fleeting glimpse

of His beauty and sweetness, you will forget all worldly beauty and pleasures for ever.

The Soul force

The soul has infinite force. It is hidden behind the thick sheet of attachment. If you can somehow remove this sheet, there is no power on earth that can withstand your power or trouble you in any manner.

All religions seek truth

There are several paths to attain one truth. You can proceed towards it through different ways. We proceed from the point we are in at a given moment. When directions are different paths will also naturally differ. The path you have decided to take is right as are those of others who have chosen different paths. All have the same goal. So, what is the dispute about?

Love of God

Love is a form of God. If there is no love, the dried-up God will not inhabit the world of our feelings and emotions. If he who is love itself does not enjoy the play of His divine self, then Anand in its rarefied form, will be dull indeed. There will be no joy in it. Not that this Anand forms itself or was not present earlier. Love and joy of love are eternal and are both God themselves.

Gopis

Gopis are those whose innate nature is to gather together all that gives joy to Radha-Madhava. There is no sense of the self in them, no recollection of the world, no concern for Brahma, no temptation for knowledge, not the least darkness of ignorance. There is just one thing there; they live only for one purpose: how to make Radha-Madhava happy.

Sadhana

There are two ways of sadhana or spiritual pursuit since times immemorial. One is that in which one is concerned with his ego—that his ego ought to follow the right path. And the other is that of total surrender of ego. The follower of the path that is concerned about works and knowledge is also concerned with the resultant self, with the welfare of ego.

Radha

There are several levels of *Bhava*, of highest emotions—attraction, love, affection, desire for caresses, *Bhava* and *Mahabhava*. All these are the emotions of the ecstatic state that descends as divine consort. Where all these emotions have their fullest and completest play, there is Radha-Bhava too. None can describe what is Radha. Radha is the happiness of Shri Krishna, Radha is his total joy. If there is no Radha, Shri Krishna will not achieve bliss. Radha is the name of the Bliss of Shri Krishna. These are various levels, various forms and various stages of development of Radha.

Grace of God

Have faith that God's Grace is always ready to descend on you. He is the embodiment of Grace. He has nothing else with him besides Grace or beyond it. Why do you feel afraid then, as to what will happen if God's Grace has been withdrawn or is not attained? When he has nothing else with him to give to you except Grace, then what else can he give you and how will you receive anything else? Have faith that God is kindness itself. Howsoever fallen you may be, howsoever many sins you may have committed, howsoever hateful an object you may be, God will never, never hate you. Rest assured on this count and call him with all the force of your aspiration and he will immediately respond and end all your difficulties.

Seven Points*God*

1. Can be attained through the will.
2. Once attained, He never deserts us.
3. Whenever God is attained, He is attained in full.
4. As soon as we wish to attain God, sins begin to wither away.
5. The pursuit for God gives us peace.
6. We die in peace and joy if we remember God during our last moments.
7. If we remember God while dying, we assuredly attain Him.

Worldly objects

1. Are attained not through will but as a result of our deeds.
2. Worldly objects invariably leave us.
3. Worldly objects are acquired only in parts.
4. As soon as we wish to acquire worldly possessions, sins begin to grow.
5. The pursuit of worldly objects results in disquiet.
6. If we remember worldly possession while dying we invariably die with disquiet and grief.
7. If we die remembering worldly possessions, we go to various hells.

Worldly and other worldly dealings

The real health is when our mind is free from disease. Whatever there is in this world is the manifestation of God—thinking this, love all, worship all. Dedicate your life for the good of all created beings.

Appendix

Bhaiji's Will

(On December 26-27, 1969, Bhaiji's condition worsened. All the doctors of Gorakhpur gave up hope. It was being proposed to take him to Delhi for an operation. All of a sudden Bhaiji asked for a writing pad in the early hours of the night and quietly began to write. He continued writing slowly for about a month and on 27 January 1970, he completed writing what he called 'My Will'. Its operative part, the one that is of public interest is given below.)

Shri Hari

Preface

Gorakhpur,
Dated 27-12-1969

The pain yesterday was severe. Today it is a little less. It occurred to me that I should, if possible write down something about my beliefs and aspirations. Not everything in my mind can be put down. But some can be. I shall try to write precisely what is in my mind. There is no ill motives behind all this effort. When I have jotted this down, if some people feel they can benefit from it, they are welcome.

I am 78 now. In India, 60 is generally considered the age when one should depart from this world. Considering this, I have gone on longer. But my hour is now approaching. There is no need to feel concerned or grieve over this. The soul is never destroyed; the body must perish. This is a certainty. Man wishes to live longer out of attachment. He should in fact wish neither to keep the body alive unnecessarily nor to give it up

early. Whatever is to happen because of our past deeds should be allowed to happen. The only care we should take is that we continue remembering God under all circumstances.

If there is pain in the body—in any part of it—it is but natural that one will feel it. The only difference is that one who realizes that he is not the body does not grieve because of pain. He does not suffer from the thought that I have fallen ill, it is a serious ailment, when will I get well? Will 'I' die of it etc. He does not consider 'I' as the body with name and form, but as the soul. The soul is eternal, free from all diseases and immortal. But even he (who considers himself separate from body) will surely feel and suffer from painful situations. So, I am also feeling pain. I find the intolerable stomach-ache giving me great pain. I do not know if this body will remain alive or pass away. However, I feel that it has outlived its utility; its special work has come to an end. Now fate will take its course and the body, which was awaiting the completion of the 'Special Work', will depart. Members of my family and all those who were near and dear to me will naturally grieve as they are attached to me. But thinking it as the working of the destiny, they should not do so and try to make a success of their lives by following what I say or through other means that may appear acceptable to them.

My Will

Gorakhpur,
27-1-1970

I have no free will. Whatever has happened and is happening or will happen is God's will and it is right and it is my will too.

Even then, it occurred to me that I should write down in brief my experience and my beliefs, aspirations and ideas. Those who may like can benefit from this after giving it due thought.

I have not a single pie saved in any bank nor have any income. There are some houses etc. in Ratangarh. I have already written a will in regard to them. Now the only wealth

left with me are my thoughts which I am putting down on paper now. These are not meant for general publicity. Members of my family and my near and dear ones may consider them and rightfully take whatever they find worth taking. This is my submission.

I cannot nominate a spiritual successor as everyone is equally dear to me. But those who have purer feeling for me will naturally receive more as compared to others. Also, those who are at a higher spiritual level will benefit more than others. But those who have pursued hypocrisy and those who profess affection for me with an eye to worldly benefits will receive very little, if at all. Hypocrites and those who try to cheat others are in fact themselves cheated. It is impossible for them to receive anything.

To men and women who have even a small amount of faith in or goodwill for me, it is my submission that they should try to cultivate the qualities of purity, renunciation and devotion. They should depend for guidance on my book *Kalyan Acharan* (Good Conduct). They will by the grace of God be blessed with substantial realization.

My mother had died when I was quite young and I was brought up by my grandmother, Shrimati Ramkaur Devi, who gave me more affection than a mother could have and also taught me very well. She had great respect for saints. It was because of her that I received the kind attention of Shri Bakhannath Maharajji, a great saint. Swami Haridasji and some other saints also blessed me because of her.

My father was a saintly soul and I was taught by him to lead a restrained life. But even otherwise, since my childhood I had an inclination towards renunciation of worldly pleasures and received practical guidance for leading a disciplined life. Afterwards, at Calcutta, I was actively initiated into a life of discipline, restraint, self-sacrifice and simplicity by the revolutionary fervour of the Swadeshi movement, as the very purpose of that movement was to instil the quality of self-sacrifice for the sake of the country.

I got the opportunity of meeting again and again with the people in the field of politics, social service, religion, literature and business. While my contact with some was nominal, with others it was quite close. This contact proved very helpful to me in leading a life of self-sacrifice. After some time, I came in contact with Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Babu Purushottamdas Tandon, Lokmanya Tilak and others. I met some other personalities too in the political field, but I was closer to the above-mentioned ones. Particularly Pujya Malaviyaji, Mahatma Gandhi and Tandonji became in a way members of my family. They considered me as a trusted child of their family. I gained so much from them. From time to time Goendkaji used to visit Calcutta and then I got the opportunity to attend his satsang. Thus along with the political, literary and social work religious tendencies also continued to develop.

When I came to Gorakhpur I gradually came in contact with a large number of saints and mahatmas, scholars, writers and well-known people in other walks of life because of my work for *Kalyan*. By the grace of God I received cooperation of all in the editing work of *Kalyan*.

In 1927, when I started from Bombay after breaking all my connections with business, I had made up my mind that after visiting Gorakhpur once, I would spend the rest of my life in bhajan or remembrance of the Supreme Reality on the banks of the Ganga. But only God's will prevails. I had gone to Gorakhpur only to arrange for *Kalyan* to be published from the Gita Press. But the volume of work of the press and of *Kalyan* went on increasing. Somehow, may be out of attachment or innate desire, I began to like and get involved in that work more and more as time passed. My desire for a solitary life was never fulfilled and I became a confirmed resident of Gorakhpur. 'Man proposes God disposes'.

I had not come to the Gita press Gorakhpur for permanent residence, but God willed otherwise and I had to remain here all along. When I first came here the volume of work was small.

There were only two manually handled printing machines—one slightly bigger than the other. Only the *Gita*, *Prem Bhakti Prakash* (Light on Bhakti of Love) and *Dhyan Se Bhagvad Prapti* (Realization of God through meditation) had been brought out. By the grace of God work steadily increased. Among the Trustees of Govind Bhawan only one, Shri Jwala Prasad Kanodia—had any acquaintance with literature. All of them were followers of Seth Jaya Dayal Goendka and had become Trustees at his instance. The work was being looked after by Shri Ghanshyamdas Jalan. The publishing activity increased after my arrival. Writers—translators—editors came forward.

I can claim no credit for whatever work has been accomplished through the Gita Press and *Kalyan*. To arrogate to myself such credit would be a falsehood and a sin. I was a person bereft of any literary, musical or artistic talent and was just a creature groping in the darkness of ignorance. God in his great kindness, gave me opportunity for study and contemplation and the company of saints and mahatmas and scholars. I also got an unending field of action and the collaboration of such friends who could guide and teach me and assist me in every manner. All this occurred by the grace of God and through his inspiration.

God has of his own will and without any planning on our part created an edifice from a particle of dust and the all round expansion of the Gita Press will continue without any hitch or hindrance so long He wants it to go on. The moment God wills that it should go, none howsoever powerful, can save it. All have equal right to this trust in God and all should benefit from it.

My life has been greatly influenced by the Upanishads, the Rishis, The *Gita* and Vaishnava sacred scriptures. I have also benefited most from Shri Shankaracharya and Shri Chaitanyadev. But in truth one of the greatest influences in my life has been that of Shri Jaya Dayal Goendka. It is thanks to him that my life and my spiritual pursuits have moved forward on the right track. He was god send to me. Although he was a

cousin on my mother's side we could rarely meet as we lived at a distance from each other. In Calcutta he himself took to visiting the business establishment of my father in Parekh Kothi, where I was drawn to him. This happened in 1910. Since then and till the moment of his departure from the world, he continued to have a soft corner for me. On many occasions I wanted to run away leaving behind the work of the Gita Press and *Kalyan*, but his great kindness always made me desist. What I received from him is incomparable. In essence, it can be said that if there is any goodness in me it is due to the grace of God and his kindness to me; if I have faults and shortcomings they are all mine.

Whatever I achieved in life has been due to the following main factors :

1. Seeing God in all.
2. Having absolute faith in His grace.
3. Having absolute trust in the Holy name.

'This is my immense wealth'. And it is so bounteous that it will not dwindle even if shared by innumerable people. Whosoever amongst you wants to be my inheritor should see God in all and live to make everyone happy and respect everyone. You should feel the rapture of the Divine grace which is coming to us in infinite measure without our asking for it and continue repeating and singing the Holy name with unflinching faith and trust. If you will observe all these three things, you will positively gain spiritually.

In my life I have come in contact with such vast numbers that I have lost the count. They were people of diverse kinds those who met me as a result of my good or bad deeds during my contacts with them in my previous lives, those who came in touch with me for some present purpose, those who met me just casually, those who had some worldly task, those who, along with mundane affairs, met me also for some unknown 'special work' ordained by destiny, and those who, more or less met just for 'special work'.

The people who came in contact with me in connection with the 'special work' ordained by God include those who met me at Shillong, Calcutta, Shimlapal, Ratangarh, Bombay, Gorakhpur and other places. Among those were Mahatmas, Sanyasis, Acharyas, high Government officials, officials of the justice and administrative departments and of education department, workers of the Gita Press, *Kalyan* and *Kalyan Kalpataru* working in editorial department, householders, servants and workers working in the house, friends, people from literary field, writers and contributors to *Kalyan*, etc. It was not necessary that all of them should have been aware of the 'special work'. Some of the names are as follows: Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya of Sharda Peeth, Jagatguru Shri Shankaracharya of Badrinath Math (Jyotirmath), Jagatguru Shri Anantacharyaji Maharaj and Shri Raghavacharyaji Maharaj of Ramanuj Sect, Acharya Gokulnathji Maharaj of Vallabha Sect, Mahatma Shri Bhawani Shankarji, Shri Raghunanadan Prasad Singhji, Swami Bhole Nathji, Swami Pragyanpadji, Swami Madhavanandji, Yogiraj Swami, Pragyanathji, Swami Akhandanandji (of Sasta Sahitya Mandal), Swami Pramanand Tirthji, Swami Gyananandji (Bharat Dharm Mahamandal), Swami Sankarsbandasji, Baba Ram Krishnadasji, Swami Gaurangdasji, Swami Chidanandji Sarswati, Swami Purushottamandji, Swami Mangalnathji, Swami Gomatidasji, Swami Swayamjoyotiji, Swami Gangeshwaranadji, Shri Brahma Baba, Pandit Ramballabha Sharanji, Shri Roopkalaji, Shri Anjani Nandan Sharanji, Shri Shripad Damodar Satvalekarji, Shri Satish Chandra Mukherji, Shri Pran Kishore Goswami, Goswami Damodarji, Shastri Shri Shrikrishna Premji, Sant Tukroji, Shri Rasik Mohan Vidyabhusan, Shri Akshaya Kumar Vandyopadhyaya, Shri Jiva Nyaya Tirth, Shri Hirendra Nath Dutt, Annie Besant, Shri Gopinath Kaviraj, Mahatma Sitaram Onkar Nath, Pandit Haran Chandra Shastri, Shri Ramdas Gaur, etc.

Ever since my childhood so far as I can remember, I have not entertained any feelings of attachment or malice for any-

one; at least knowingly I have not done anything which might cause pain to others or be against others' interests.

I was attracted towards the revolutionaries and their movement at Calcutta because of my studies of their important periodicals *Yugantar*, *Sandhya* and other literature and because of the company of the young people who were leading a life of great self-negation for the revolutionary cause. During the revolutionary movement for the freedom of the Motherland, I did develop feelings of animus against foreign rule as also against some high British officials. But that was for the sake of the independence of the country, and disappeared when I came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi.

But even in that attitude of hostility there was a desire in my mind to reform those who aroused hostility by self-sacrifice. That is why, by the grace of God I did nothing that would have done any personal harm to any Englishman or Muslim. There is a large number of my Christian and Muslim friends who love me as brother. Among the Christians, reverend C.F. Andrews and Mr. Arthur Massey were very kind to me. Among Muslims, Dr. Mohammad Sayed Hafiz, Shri Sayed Kalim Ali, Shri Badruddin and some others had, and still have, very affectionate relations with me. Many Christian scholars and Muslim residents of Gorakhpur had, and still have, very very nice dealings with me. I am grateful to all of them.

Although I have tried not to do anything with any evil intent because of my persistence with certain ideals and principles or because of attachments, there have been several occasions when my behaviour with certain people has been insulting. I have also caused grief to many people by my harsh and heartless conduct, by falsehood, by such truthful behaviour, too, which appeared as untruthful. I sincerely seek pardon for all this from the people of my household as well as outsiders. My prayer is that all of them should show kindness to me and forgive me for my acts of omission and commission.

All the religions in India that have God as their ultimate objective and give priority to the divine pursuits, are beneficial

religions and should not be discriminated against as regards their ultimate goal. My firm conviction is that the ultimate Reality, Truth and God or soul is 'one and indivisible.' He is eternally engaged in His cosmic play within Himself. All theistic and divine religions show the path to God realization as all rivers flow from different directions into one and the same ocean. Differences between faiths and in the inunciation of doctrines by various scholars and saints are inevitable. If you want to approach Kashi from different parts of the country, say from Assam, the Punjab, the South and the Himalayas, you cannot do so by traversing the same path. Similarly if a saint follows a certain path through his contemplation, and reaches his goal, his mind will describe that path only as the real path after tracing back his steps from the goal. In the ultimate state there is no question and no answer. There you are a silent enjoyer only. And where there is speech that is not the point of realization or identification with your ultimate goal. So, it is not the final achievement but the path, the variety of the means for the final achievement, that is described. And this variety is inevitable. All realized saints, to whatever religion or sect they may belong, speak of what they think is Truth, and the Truth so spoken is circumscribed by the limits of one's intellect and its grasp.

Therefore, as far as possible, I have never opposed any saint of any sect or religion of its own method of Sadhana or spiritual pursuit. It appears to me that one and the same Truth is manifested in different forms. I wish that people should inherit this realization and recognition of mine also, and to those only who desire to do so with all sincerity, I hand over this inheritance.

Through God's grace, I have been having opportunities in my life to render service to the poor, the suffering and the helpless men and women as well as animals like cows. It will be hard to believe what a huge amount of money has been spent for such work. And the wonder of it all is that except in the case of flood or famine relief work, there has been no

advertisement or publicity of such acts and no call for money went to any one for them. By the grace of God, money, which is a power of the Divine, continued to be received from the true worshippers of God—men and women—and was spent in serving the people as best as could be done. I think it was God and His inspiration which acted in the matter. There should not be a little bit of pride in any good work and it should be taken as inspired by the Divine only. I have tried to do so. It is my wish that all may do the same.

It is my firm conviction and experience that none else can cause us any harm unless it is a consequence of our own past misdeeds; but if someone intends to do harm to others, he certainly becomes liable to the consequences of his own sins. Therefore, no one should think of causing any harm to anyone or act as such. One should certainly think and act so that others may feel happy. Although this happiness will be attained in accordance with the past deeds of the persons concerned, yet, our own effort to please others will enable us to earn the fruits of our good deeds, and if an effort is made without any consideration of results to be obtained and purely for the sake of the Divine and as a worship, then it will be of help in attaining God.

If it ever appears to us that harm has come to us because of any other person, we should at once begin to convince ourselves that nothing ever happens that is not a direct result of our own deeds, our own acts. If we see someone else's hand, it should be considered as an instrument only. And if someone has actually done so, he himself has committed a sin and done harm to himself; and one who does so can only be considered a mad person. And a mad person is always an object of pity and pardon. Therefore, we should pray to God to pardon him. We should never think of any harm to him in retaliation.

There are various ways to do good to others, namely, without others knowing about it, or after informing him, or after informing the members of his family, or after informing a wider number of people about it—all this is good. It is nice to

do good to others in any form. It is our sacred duty. But the first one is the best of all, and others are in descending order of importance.

To expect praise in return for a good deed done to anyone, to expect obligation or return of the deed in the same manner, to wish for name and fame, to oblige a person with our deeds in such a manner that he feels compelled to do what we wish him to do, to desire happiness in return in this life or afterwards, all these are feelings that involve return for the deed done. These deeds that are pure in intention should be done as a duty, even if there is a demand for the return attached to them.

But all this is just 'doing good' and not 'loving.' A lover never does any good deed for his beloved. He loves entirely because he cannot do otherwise. In this, the question of telling his beloved or anyone else does not arise at all; rather what a lover is concerned with all the time is that his beloved may not be aware that he is feeling pained at his grief. The lover does not sit in front of his beloved and cry his heart out. He does not express his inner pangs of pain before others too. It does not mean that his pain is any the less. No, he suffers very sharp pain. Only he does not publicise his pain, nor does he try to show to his beloved through any of his actions, or impress upon him through any gesture, that he is grieved. This is because the lover thinks that such a display may throw a burden of obligation on his beloved. So he does the utmost that he can quietly, unobtrusively. He does everything to mitigate pain as he would do in case of his own pain. Even then, there is a difference between mitigating one's own pain and the suffering of one's beloved. A man can easily bear his pain and often treats it with negligence, but he cannot bear the suffering of his beloved or neglect it, nor can he look at any other person for any assistance. Whatever he can do, he does it forthwith and as perfectly as possible. Only such a lover has learnt true lessons of love. I am glad I too have one or two

such lovers. In fact those who wish to taste love should mould themselves in this pattern.

In fact, there was a plan to get some 'special work' performed by me in addition to the usual acts this physical body had to perform. One who had made the plan and to the extent it was made, has enabled me, by his power and grace, to translate it into action to a considerable extent although not to the extent or in the way I had wished it to be done. The people who came in contact with me must have benefited to some extent but those who out of selfishness wanted that I should be instrumental to do a bad deed; have not succeeded in their attempt. Their progress was handicapped and they suffered harm to some extent. May God bless them.

Although whatever good has been done has had its impact far and wide and its impression may remain for long, I do not know fully, nor do I wish to know, what is the exact nature of this goodness. I only know that it is Divine task and it is a great task.

There are a large number of men and women who have affection for me and faith and trust in me. Many of them are entirely sincere and God will certainly reward them in accordance with their faith and trust and affection. However, those who profess these qualities but instead of aiming at the attainment of God through them, only desire for worldly pleasures will not attain God because of their false conduct. In fact, my acquisition is nil. Whatever there is, is in God. Those who aspire to attain God or His love through me will succeed in their attempt because of the purity of their hearts and by the grace of God. But their relation with me ought to be limited only the extent it is concerned with God realization and there is no mixture of worldly considerations in it. Therefore, I am aware that there are a number of people—men and women—living in far-off places who, because they have faith borne out of the contact with God, are nearing the goal of God realization and, on the other hand, there are people who live nearby but because they lack the right thoughts are left far behind. I do

not mean to say that all those, who live near me, are of this type. There are many who are truly benefiting and will benefit, but I cannot reveal their names.

Those who live near me and yet are far away from me do not achieve anything and see only distortions in everything. But those who live far away and yet are near to my heart, whose heart has become pure because of their sincere faith and who have thereby acquired noble sentiments, come to know of many inner secrets and truly benefit from the company of the saintly souls. I have been in contact with both type of persons in my life. To some, I wanted to give something and I tried my level best to do so, but they could not receive anything because they kept themselves aloof from my heart. There were, on the other hand, people about whom I did not make any effort, but yet who considerably benefited from me because of their being in harmony with my feelings and sentiments. Thus, those who were proclaiming loudly to the world their nearness to me remained blank and those about whom I do not know anything and with whom I have had no contact, turned out to be truly receptive. Those who received are still receiving and because their path is clear, will continue to receive what they deserve. Therefore, so long as I live, those who are desirous to receive something should try to come near to my sentiments—physical nearness is immaterial in this context—and get busy in spiritual pursuits of my liking so that the doors of their receptivity may open. Otherwise, they will continue to see distortions in future too, as in the past, and will be losers all along the line.

Whosoever visits me comes with offers of some kind or other—be it devotion, faith, love, goodwill, scholarship, advice, humility, forgiveness, ability to rise above the ego, above fault finding. There are lakhs of such men and women too who have not visited me but have always offered me like this and are still doing so. Therefore, I am obliged to them all and am grateful to them. People of all kinds, sympathetic and unsympathetic, visit me and do me the great good of reminding me that God appears in all sorts of guises—attractive and unattractive, and

that I should never forget to recognise Him in very possible form and hue. All are objects of reverence for me from this point of view also—all are various forms of God and I bow to them all. I have always tried to entertain and develop this sentiment and I wish my inheritors may also receive it from me.

Those of the household and outsiders who have come in contact with me for the sake of spiritual pursuit only can be placed in the following two categories :

1. Those engaged in spiritual pursuits since previous births.
2. Those engaged in pursuits in this life.

These can further be sub-divided into the following two categories :

1. Those who were in contact with me in previous lives.
2. Those with whom contact was formed in this life.

Those who came in contact with me in this life or in previous lives can also be categorized in the following four divisions :

1. Those engaged purely in spiritual pursuit.
2. Those who are engaged in spiritual pursuit mixed, more or less, with worldly pursuits as well.
3. Those who have mainly worldly desires.
4. Those who are aspirants only in name and are wholly engrossed in worldly pursuits.

I wish well to all of them, but as ordained by the Divine, they will be successful or not in accordance with their sentiments.

They are bound to succeed who are more closely in touch with me on the basis of similarity of sentiments.

Success in spiritual pursuits depends on the degree of our surrender to Him. We should not spare any effort towards right action but should not have any egotistic feelings as to our capacity. We should have full faith in the grace of Him to whom we have surrendered and success is ensured for us. Those who stand on this level should try to move up. Those who are below this level or not on any level at all should make attempts without delay. God bears the burden of those who are engaged in serving others with pure intentions. Those aspirants who keep company with the saints and seers should not get disheartened and should continue their endeavours with trust in His grace and with firm faith that God has made them his own and accepted them.

Some people who love me or have faith in me want to write my biography or are already writing it. I appreciate the effort as far as the purity of their intention is concerned and I express my gratefulness to them for their affection. But my submission to them is to reconsider what they are doing or propose to do.

First of all, to write the story of this body, consisting of the five elements and flesh and bones and given a name, is a sort of hero-worship which is undesirable. I do not belong to the category which deserves such a treatment. In fact, no person who is established in his real self, will approve of or attach importance to this sort of hagiology.

Secondly, such writers are not acquainted with life, with true secrets of life, with the sources of inspiration behind the activities of a life-time which reflect a real philosophy of life. Even as regards external details, only such details are narrated by the biographers which demonstrate merely the importance of the subject. They hide or leave out from the narration the weaknesses and faults of a person because they aim not at a real pen-portrait of the subject under treatment but merely give expression to their faith in him to enable the world to benefit thereby. But this makes the biography one-sided and not fully truthful and there is every possibility of distortion when only

half-truths are presented. That is why I cannot approve of biographical writings.

Thirdly, in spite of the fact that my body, made up as it is of five elements and is a product of nature and a consequence of my previous Karmas or deeds, was still inspired by the Divine to take up some 'special work'. I cannot reveal what that work is nor can anyone delve deep enough in it to know what it is. Writers are not aware what were the thoughts and reactions that engrossed me from time to time concerning that 'special work' and I too cannot write or tell anyone about them. Under such circumstances, no biographer can write about my life in a realistic manner. I am also open to all the usual weakness and foibles that invade a body made up of the five elements and given a name. Many undesirable things have happened concerning it, and still happen. If these are hidden, the biography will not be adhering to truth, and if they are narrated, it will not do good to the world. Therefore, it is best if the desire to write my biography to show respect to me and to do good to the world through it, is given up.

The true method of showing respect to me and enabling the world to benefit thereby is to do every work of this life as a worship and make everyone happy in the world and spend a life of devotion by imbibing the qualities of restraint, self-sacrifice, service, humility, constant remembrance of the Divine, thinking and talking only of Him and doing only what He wants us to do in accordance with my sentiments and ideas and advice and teachings. This is the inheritance of my ideas and sentiments and in this consists true service and respect to me. And this ought to be done not after I am no more, but during my life-time itself by all those brothers and sisters who have faith in me and love me. This will give me happiness and they will also benefit thereby.

Although praise or blame are of no significance to a pure soul, yet, they have their impact in the day-to-day world. But we should always try to escape from the tendency to get benefit out of others' faults and to keep ourselves secure from harm

out of others' praise. I have tried again and again to benefit from my respect for those who found fault with me. And it is my proven experience that 70 to 80 per cent people, who blame us, tell us the truth and thus benefit us. As against this, from 25 to 40 per cent people, who shower praises on us exaggerate our qualities and tell lies—some deliberately with a selfish motive and others because of misunderstanding the true situation. They do us great harm. In fact, it is improper to feel happy or unhappy from praise or blame but generally one should disregard praise and view the expressions of blame with deep attention in order to remove the defects pointed out. And one should under no circumstances show disrespect to the person blaming us. Those who would heed this advice of mine can do so as an inheritance and they may be quite large in number.

There are many weaknesses in my life too. I feel sorry for the sins I have committed in my life but I do not wish to pass them on to anyone inheritance. I request everyone from the core of my heart that none should try to emulate my faults under any circumstances. Only those acts should be emulated which are in accordance with the Shastras and really beneficial. If there is even the least possibility that they will cause one's downfall, they ought to be rejected outright and *in toto*.

My favourite Dohas, Chaupais, Shlokas and Songs

Knowing that Sita and Rama pervade the world

^ bow to them with folded hands.

(*Manas* 7/1/1)

O Uma! those who worship at the feet of Rama

And have conquered desire, pride and anger

See their Lord everywhere

How can they, then, feel hostility towards anyone?

(*Manas* 7/1/12 Kha)

Unique is the soul, O Hanuman,
Who is firm in the belief
That he is the servant
And this entire universe is the manifestation of his Lord
Whom he is to serve.

(Manas 4/3)

The Yogin who has taken his stand upon oneness
And loves me in all beings
However and in all ways he lives and acts
Lives and acts in Me.

(Gita 6/31)

He, O Arjun, Who sees with equality everything
In the image of the self
Whether it be grief or it be happiness
Him I hold to be the supreme Yogin

(Gita 6/32)

The man whose self is in Yoga
Sees the self in all beings
And all beings in self
He is equal-visioned everywhere.

(Gita 6/29)

He who sees Me everywhere
And sees all in Me
To him I do not get lost
Nor does he get lost to Me.

(Gita 6/30)

At the end of many births
The man of knowledge attains to Me
Very rare is the great soul
Who knows that Vasudeo, the omnipresent Being,
Is all that is.

(Gita 7/19)

This is my divine Maya of the gunas
 And it is hard to overcome
 Those cross beyond it
 Who approach Me.

(Gita 7/14)

Be a doer of my works
 Accept Me as the supreme being and object
 Become My Bhakta
 Be free from attachment and without
 enmity to all existences
 For such a man comes to Me, O Pandava!

(Gita 11/55)

It is by ranging over the objects with the senses
 But with senses subject to the self
 Freed from liking and disliking
 That one gets into a large and sweet
 Clearness of soul and temperament
 In which passion and grief find no place
 The intelligence of such a man
 Is rapidly established in its proper seat.

(Gita 2/64 and 2/65)

In the object of this or that sense
 Liking and disliking are set in ambush
 Fall not into their power
 For they are the besetters of the soul in its path.

(Gita 3/34)

The enjoyments born of the touches of things
 Are causes of sorrow
 They have a beginning and an end
 Therefore, the sage, the man of awakened understanding
 Does not place his delight in these.

(Gita 5/22)

Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world
Love and turn to Me.

(Gita 9/33)

Having come to Me
These great souls come not again to birth
To this transient and painful condition of our
mortal being
They reach the highest perfection.

(Gita 8/15)

Even a moment's company of Bhaktas
Is preferable to the attainment of heavenly status
Or the deliverance from the cycle of death and birth
Not to speak of the ephemeral joys of
The ordinary human beings.

(Bhagavata 1/18/13)

Man has right only on that portion of wealth
Which suffices for his minimum bodily needs
If one thinks he has a right over greater wealth
He is a thief; he should be penalized.

(Bhagavata 7/14/8)

This sky, this wind, fire, water
Earth and stones and planets
All created beings, all directions
Flowers and plants and rivers and oceans
All, all are limbs of the Supreme Lord.
It is He who is manifesting Himself through them
One who realizes this, prostrates before all—animate or
inanimate—
As before the Lord he worships.

(Bhagavata 11/2/41)

Listen to the voice of Dharma
 And act accordingly
 Do as your soul, your inner self, ordains
 And act not ever against it.

(Padma Puran, Shrishti Khand 19/355-56)

May all be happy and in peace
 May all see good every where
 May all be delivered of sufferings and grief.

(Garud Puran 2/35/51)

Become my minded, my lover and adorer
 A sacrificer to Me
 Bow thyself to Me
 To Me thou shalt come
 This is my pledge and promise to thee
 for dear art thou to Me.

(Gita 18/65)

Abandon all dharmas
 and take refuge in Me alone
 I will deliver thee from all sins and evil
 Do not grieve.

(Gita 18/66)

He whose mind is undisturbed
 In the midst of sorrows and amid pleasures
 Is free from desire
 from whom liking and fear and wrath have
 passed away
 He is the sage of settled understanding.

(Gita 2/56)

With intelligence stable, unbewildered,
 The knower of Brahma, living in Brahma

Neither rejoices on obtaining what is pleasant
Nor sorrows on obtaining what is unpleasant.

(Gita 5/20)

He who neither desires the pleasant and rejoices
at its touch
Nor abhors the unpleasant and sorrows at its touch
Who has abolished the distinction between
fortunate and unfortunate happenings
He is dear to Me.

(Gita 12/17)

All this is for habitation by the Lord
Whatever is individual universe of movement
in the universal motion
By that renounced thou shouldest enjoy
Lust not after any man's possession.

(Ishavasyopanishad 1)

He who sees everywhere the Self in all existences
And all existences in the Self
Shrinks not thereafter from aught.

(Ishavasyopanishad 6)

He in whom it is the Self-Being
That has become all existences that are Becomings
For he has the perfect knowledge
How shall he be deluded
Whence shall he have grief who sees
everywhere oneness?

(Ishavasyopanishad 7)

When all desires of man's heart are left behind
Then the mortal man becomes immortal
And is delivered of the cycle of death and birth
He realises Brahma in that state of emancipation.

(Kathopanishad 1/6/15)

The soul, the Ultimate Reality is
 not realizable
 Through words or logical proofs
 or mental exertions and recitations of Shashtras
 It is attained by him whom it blesses and possesses
 To him it reveals itself of its own accord.

(Kathopanishad 1/3/23)

He who abandons all desires
 And lives and acts free from longing
 Who has no 'I' or 'mine'
 He attains to the great peace.

(Gita 2/71)

When a man has known Me
 As the Enjoys of the sacrifice of all the worlds
 The friend of all creatures
 He comes by the peace.

(Gita 5/29)

Who has faith
 Who has conquered and controlled the mind and
 the senses
 Who has fixed his whole conscious being on the
 supreme Reality
 He attains knowledge
 And having attained knowledge he goes swiftly
 to the supreme peace.

(Gita 4/39)

All that was unbuilt through successive births
 Can be re-built here and now
 Only belong to Rama
 Remember His Name
 And shun the company of the fallen, O Tulsi!
 Be attached to Rama only, O Tulsi,

And keep equality before the world
Reject worldly love and hate and grief
Thou shalt then overcome them all.

(Dohawali)

Make me prostrate, O Lord, before Thee to be
blessed with the dust of Thy feet
Let all my pride be drowned in my tears.
I merely insult myself when I think of my personal glory
Why do I surround myself in the narrow circle of myself
And gaze only at myself all the time?
Let all my pride be drowned in my tears
Let me not covet name and fame or work for them
Let only Thy wish be fulfilled in my life hence forward
Let Thy eternal peace and glittering grace be ever mine,
Manifest, O Lord, within my lotus-heart, too
Let all my pride be drowned in my tears.

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Errata

Page 6, line 21 : *read* 1892 *for* 1982

Page 91, line 17 : *read* Laxmi Narain Grade *for* Laxman
Narayan Garde

Page 96, line 19 : *read* If *for* It

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